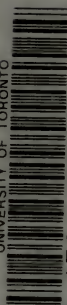
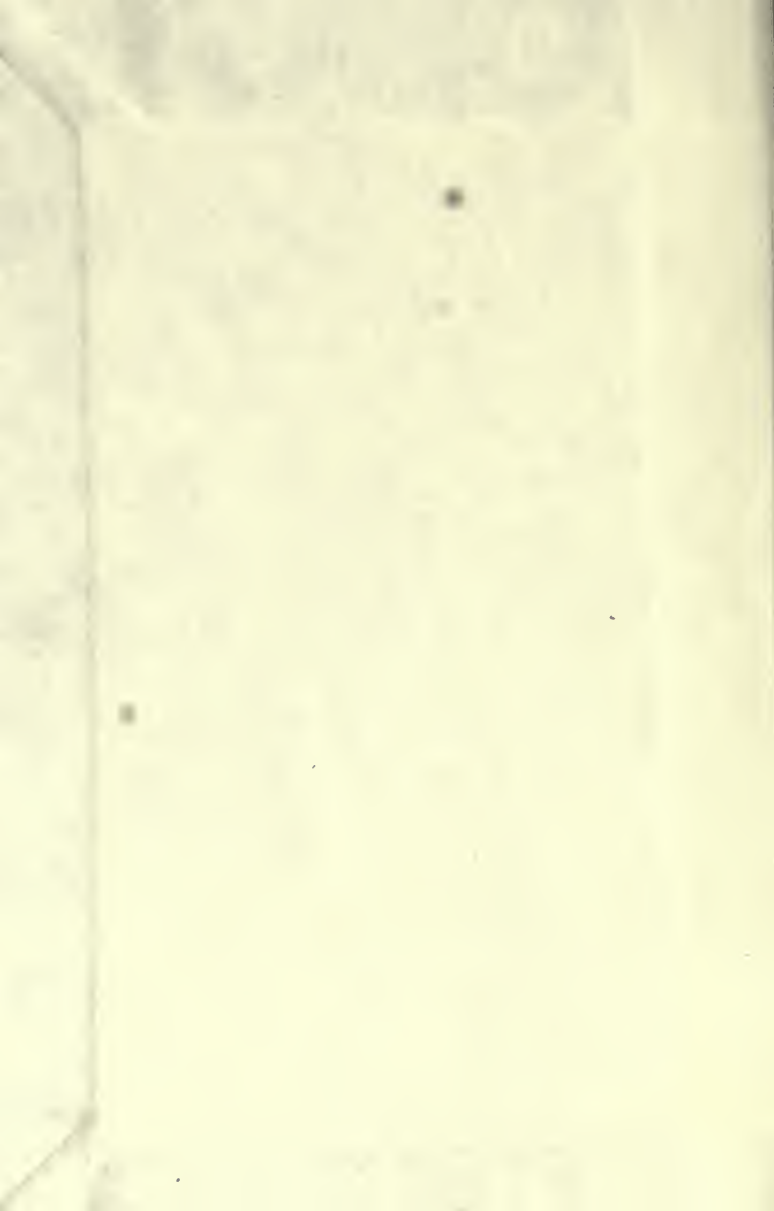


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PARIS



THREE CITIES: LOURDES, ROME, PARIS

PARIS

BY

ÉMILE ZOLA

TRANSLATED BY

ERNEST ALFRED VIZETELLY

VOLUME II

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BOOK III — *continued*

IV

THE MAN HUNT

ON the afternoon of that same day such a keen desire for space and the open air came upon Guillaume, that Pierre consented to accompany him on a long walk in the Bois de Boulogne. The priest, upon returning from his interview with Monferrand, had informed his brother that the government once more wished to get rid of Nicholas Barthès. However, they were so perplexed as to how they should impart these tidings to the old man, that they resolved to postpone the matter until the evening. During their walk they might devise some means of breaking the news in a gentle way. As for the walk, this seemed to offer no danger; to all appearance Guillaume was in no wise threatened, so why should he continue hiding? Thus the brothers sallied forth and entered the Bois by the Sablons gate, which was the nearest to them.

The last days of March had now come, and the trees were beginning to show some greenery, so soft and light, however, that one might have thought it was pale moss or delicate lace hanging between the stems and boughs. Although the sky remained of an ashen grey, the rain, after falling throughout the night and morning, had ceased; and exquisite freshness

pervaded that wood now awakening to life once more, with its foliage dripping in the mild and peaceful atmosphere. The mid-Lent rejoicings had apparently attracted the populace to the centre of Paris, for in the avenues one found only the fashionable folks of select days, the people of society who come thither when the multitude stops away. There were carriages and gentlemen on horseback; beautiful aristocratic ladies who had alighted from their broughams or landaus; and wet-nurses with streaming ribbons, who carried infants wearing the most costly lace. Of the middle-classes, however, one found only a few matrons living in the neighbourhood, who sat here and there on the benches busy with embroidery or watching their children play.

Pierre and Guillaume followed the Allée de Longchamp as far as the road going from Madrid to the lakes. Then they took their way under the trees, alongside the little Longchamp rivulet. They wished to reach the lakes, pass round them, and return home by way of the Maillot gate. But so charming and peaceful was the deserted plantation through which they passed, that they yielded to a desire to sit down and taste the delight of resting amidst all the budding springtide around them. A fallen tree served them as a bench, and it was possible for them to fancy themselves far away from Paris, in the depths of some real forest. It was, too, of a real forest that Guillaume began to think on thus emerging from his long, voluntary imprisonment. Ah! for the space; and for the health-bringing air which courses between that forest's branches, that forest of the world which

by right should be man's inalienable domain! However, the name of Barthès, the perpetual prisoner, came back to Guillaume's lips, and he sighed mournfully. The thought that there should be even a single man whose liberty was thus ever assailed, sufficed to poison the pure atmosphere he breathed.

"What will you say to Barthès?" he asked his brother. "The poor fellow must necessarily be warned. Exile is at any rate preferable to imprisonment."

Pierre sadly waved his hand. "Yes, of course, I must warn him. But what a painful task it is!"

Guillaume made no rejoinder, for at that very moment, in that remote, deserted nook, where they could fancy themselves at the world's end, a most extraordinary spectacle was presented to their view. Something or rather someone leapt out of a thicket and bounded past them. It was assuredly a man, but one who was so unrecognisable, so miry, so woful and so frightful, that he might have been taken for an animal, a boar that hounds had tracked and forced from his retreat. On seeing the rivulet, he hesitated for a moment, and then followed its course. But, all at once, as a sound of footsteps and panting breath drew nearer, he sprang into the water, which reached his thighs, bounded on to the further bank, and vanished from sight behind a clump of pines. A moment afterwards some keepers and policemen rushed by, skirting the rivulet, and in their turn disappearing. It was a man hunt that had gone past, a fierce, secret hunt with no display of scarlet or blast of horns athwart the soft, sprouting foliage.

"Some rascal or other," muttered Pierre. "Ah! the wretched fellow!"

Guillaume made a gesture of discouragement. "Gendarmes and prison!" said he. "They still constitute society's only schooling system!"

Meantime the man was still running on, farther and farther away.

When, on the previous night, Salvat had suddenly escaped from the detectives by bounding into the Bois de Boulogne, it had occurred to him to slip round to the Dauphine gate and there descend into the deep ditch¹ of the city ramparts. He remembered days of enforced idleness which he had spent there, in nooks where, for his own part, he had never met a living soul. Nowhere, indeed, could one find more secret places of retreat, hedged round by thicker bushes, or concealed from view by loftier herbage. Some corners of the ditch, at certain angles of the massive bastions, are favourite dens or nests for thieves and lovers. Salvat, as he made his way through the thickest of the brambles, nettles and ivy, was lucky enough to find a cavity full of dry leaves, in which he buried himself to the chin. The rain had already drenched him, and after slipping down the muddy slope, he had frequently been obliged to grope his way upon all fours. So those dry leaves proved a boon such as he had not dared to hope for. They dried him somewhat, serving as a blanket in which he coiled himself after his wild race through the dank darkness. The

¹ This ditch or dry moat is about 30 feet deep and 50 feet wide. The counterscarp by which one may descend into it has an angle of 45 degrees. — *Trans.*

rain still fell, but he now only felt it on his head, and, weary as he was, he gradually sank into deep slumber beneath the continuous drizzle. When he opened his eyes again, the dawn was breaking, and it was probably about six o'clock. During his sleep the rain had ended by soaking the leaves, so that he was now immersed in a kind of chilly bath. Still he remained in it, feeling that he was there sheltered from the police, who must now surely be searching for him. None of those bloodhounds would guess his presence in that hole, for his body was quite buried, and briars almost completely hid his head. So he did not stir, but watched the rise of the dawn.

When at eight o'clock some policemen and keepers came by, searching the ditch, they did not perceive him. As he had anticipated, the hunt had begun at the first glimmer of light. For a time his heart beat violently; however, nobody else passed, nothing whatever stirred the grass. The only sounds that reached him were faint ones from the Bois de Boulogne, the ring of a bicyclist's bell, the thud of a horse's hoofs, the rumble of carriage wheels. And time went by, nine o'clock came, and then ten o'clock. Since the rain had ceased falling, Salvat had not suffered so much from the cold, for he was wearing a thick overcoat which little Mathis had given him. But, on the other hand, hunger was coming back; there was a burning sensation in his stomach, and leaden hoops seemed to be pressing against his ribs. He had eaten nothing for two days; he had been starving already on the previous evening, when he had accepted a glass of beer at that tavern at Montmartre. Nevertheless,

his plan was to remain in the ditch until nightfall, and then slip away in the direction of the village of Boulogne, where he knew of a means of egress from the wood. He was not caught yet, he repeated, he might still manage to escape. Then he tried to get to sleep again, but failed, so painful had his sufferings become. By the time it was eleven, everything swam before his eyes. He once nearly fainted, and thought that he was going to die. Then rage gradually mastered him, and, all at once, he sprang out of his leafy hiding-place, desperately hungering for food, unable to remain there any longer, and determined to find something to eat, even should it cost him his liberty and life. It was then noon.

On leaving the ditch he found the spreading lawns of the *château* of La Muette before him. He crossed them at a run, like a madman, instinctively going towards Boulogne, with the one idea that his only means of escape lay in that direction. It seemed miraculous that nobody paid attention to his helter-skelter flight. However, when he had reached the cover of some trees he became conscious of his imprudence, and almost regretted the sudden madness which had borne him along, eager for escape. Trembling nervously, he bent low among some furze bushes, and waited for a few minutes to ascertain if the police were behind him. Then with watchful eye and ready ear, wonderful instinct and scent of danger, he slowly went his way again. He hoped to pass between the upper lake and the Auteuil race-course; but there were few trees in that part, and they formed a broad avenue. He therefore had to exert all his skill in

order to avoid observation, availing himself of the slenderest stems, the smallest bushes, as screens, and only venturing onward after a lengthy inspection of his surroundings. Before long the sight of a guard in the distance revived his fears and detained him, stretched on the ground behind some brambles, for a full quarter of an hour. Then the approach first of a cab, whose driver had lost his way, and afterwards of a strolling pedestrian, in turn sufficed to stop him. He breathed once more, however, when, after passing the Mortemart hillock, he was able to enter the thickets lying between the two roads which lead to Boulogne and St. Cloud. The coppices thereabouts were dense, and he merely had to follow them, screened from view, in order to reach the outlet he knew of, which was now near at hand. So he was surely saved.

But all at once, at a distance of some five-and-thirty yards, he saw a keeper, erect and motionless, barring his way. He turned slightly to the left and there perceived another keeper, who also seemed to be awaiting him. And there were more and more of them; at every fifty paces or so stood a fresh one, the whole forming a *cordon*, the meshes as it were of a huge net. The worst was that he must have been perceived, for a light cry, like the clear call of an owl, rang out, and was repeated farther and farther off. The hunters were at last on the right scent, prudence had become superfluous, and it was only by flight that the quarry might now hope to escape. Salvat understood this so well that he suddenly began to run, leaping over all obstacles and darting between

the trees, careless whether he were seen or heard. A few bounds carried him across the Avenue de St. Cloud into the plantations stretching to the Allée de la Reine Marguerite. There the undergrowth was very dense; in the whole Bois there are no more closely set thickets. In summer they become one vast entanglement of verdure, amidst which, had it been the leafy season, Salvat might well have managed to secrete himself. For a moment he did find himself alone, and thereupon he halted to listen. He could neither see nor hear the keepers now. Had they lost his track, then? Profound quietude reigned under the fresh young foliage. But the light, owlish cry arose once more, branches cracked, and he resumed his wild flight, hurrying straight before him. Unluckily he found the Allée de la Reine Marguerite guarded by policemen, so that he could not cross over, but had to skirt it without quitting the thickets. And now his back was turned towards Boulogne; he was retracing his steps towards Paris. However, a last idea came to his bewildered mind: it was to run on in this wise as far as the shady spots around Madrid, and then, by stealing from copse to copse, attempt to reach the Seine. To proceed thither across the bare expanse of the race-course and training ground was not for a moment to be thought of.

So Salvat still ran on and on. But on reaching the Allée de Longchamp he found it guarded like the other roads, and therefore had to relinquish his plan of escaping by way of Madrid and the river-bank. While he was perforce making a bend alongside the Pré Catelan, he became aware that the keepers, led by

detectives, were drawing yet nearer to him, confining his movements to a smaller and smaller area. And his race soon acquired all the frenzy of despair. Haggard and breathless he leapt mounds, rushed down slopes, fought his way past multitudinous obstacles. He forced a passage through brambles, broke down palings, thrice caught his feet in wire-work which he had not seen, and fell among nettles, yet picked himself up and went on again, spurred by the stinging of his hands and face. It was then that Guillaume and Pierre saw him pass, unrecognisable and frightful, taking to the muddy water of the rivulet like a stag which seeks to set a last obstacle between itself and the hounds. There came to him a wild idea of getting to the lake, and swimming, unperceived, to the island in the centre of it. That, he madly thought, would be a safe retreat, where he might burrow and hide himself without possibility of discovery. And so he still ran on. But once again the sight of some guards made him retrace his steps, and he was compelled to go back and back in the direction of Paris, chased, forced towards the very fortifications whence he had started that morning. It was now nearly three in the afternoon. For more than two hours and a half he had been running.

At last he saw a soft, sandy ride for horsemen before him. He crossed it, splashing through the mire left by the rain, and reached a little pathway, a delightful lovers' lane, as shady in summer as any arbour. For some time he was able to follow it, concealed from observation, and with his hopes reviving. But it led him to one of those broad, straight avenues

where carriages and bicycles, the whole afternoon-pageant of society, swept past under the mild and cloudy sky. So he returned to the thickets, fell once more upon the keepers, lost all notion of the direction he took, and even all power of thought, becoming a mere thing carried along and thrown hither and thither by the chances of the pursuit which pressed more and more closely upon him. Star-like crossways followed one upon other, and at last he came to a broad lawn, where the full light dazzled him. And there he suddenly felt the hot, panting breath of his pursuers close in the rear. Eager, hungry breath it was, like that of hounds seeking to devour him. Shouts rang out, one hand almost caught hold of him, there was a rush of heavy feet, a scramble to seize him. But with a supreme effort he leapt upon a bank, crawled to its summit, rose again, and once more found himself alone, still running on amid the fresh and quiet greenery.

Nevertheless, this was the end. He almost fell flat upon the ground. His aching feet could no longer carry him; blood was oozing from his ears, and froth had come to his mouth. His heart beat with such violence that it seemed likely to break his ribs. Water and perspiration streamed from him, he was miry and haggard and tortured by hunger, conquered, in fact, more by hunger than by fatigue. And through the mist which seemed to have gathered before his wild eyes, he suddenly saw an open doorway, the doorway of a coach-house in the rear of a kind of chalet, sequestered among trees. Excepting a big white cat, which took to flight, there was not a living

creature in the place. Salvat plunged into it and rolled over on a heap of straw, among some empty casks. He was scarcely hidden there when he heard the chase sweep by, the detectives and the keepers losing scent, passing the chalet and rushing in the direction of the Paris ramparts. The noise of their heavy boots died away, and deep silence fell, while the hunted man, who had carried both hands to his heart to stay its beating, sank into the most complete prostration, with big tears trickling from his closed eyes.

Whilst all this was going on, Pierre and Guillaume, after a brief rest, had resumed their walk, reaching the lake and proceeding towards the crossway of the Cascades, in order to return to Neuilly by the road beyond the water. However, a shower fell, compelling them to take shelter under the big leafless branches of a chestnut-tree. Then, as the rain came down more heavily and they could perceive a kind of chalet, a little café-restaurant amid a clump of trees, they hastened thither for better protection. In a side road, which they passed on their way, they saw a cab standing, its driver waiting there in philosophical fashion under the falling shower. Pierre, moreover, noticed a young man stepping out briskly in front of them, a young man resembling Gérard de Quinsac, who, whilst walking in the Bois, had no doubt been overtaken by the rain, and like themselves was seeking shelter in the chalet. However, on entering the latter's public room, the priest saw no sign of the gentleman, and concluded that he must have been mistaken. This public room, which had a kind of glazed verandah

overlooking the Bois, contained a few chairs and tables, the latter with marble tops. On the first floor there were four or five private rooms reached by a narrow passage. Though the doors were open the place had as yet scarcely emerged from its winter's rest. There was nobody about, and on all sides one found the dampness common to establishments which, from lack of custom, are compelled to close from November until March. In the rear were some stables, a coachhouse, and various mossy, picturesque out-buildings, which painters and gardeners would now soon embellish for the gay pleasure parties which the fine weather would bring.

"I really think that they haven't opened for the season yet," said Guillaume as he entered the silent house.

"At all events they will let us stay here till the rain stops," answered Pierre, seating himself at one of the little tables.

However, a waiter suddenly made his appearance seemingly in a great hurry. He had come down from the first floor, and eagerly rummaged a cupboard for a few dry biscuits, which he laid upon a plate. At last he condescended to serve the brothers two glasses of Chartreuse.

In one of the private rooms upstairs Baroness Duvillard, who had driven to the chalet in a cab, had been awaiting her lover Gérard for nearly half an hour. It was there that, during the charity bazaar, they had given each other an appointment. For them the chalet had precious memories: two years previously, on discovering that secluded nest, which was so

deserted in the early, hesitating days of chilly spring, they had met there under circumstances which they could not forget. And the Baroness, in choosing the house for the supreme assignation of their dying passion, had certainly not been influenced merely by a fear that she might be spied upon elsewhere. She had, indeed, thought of the first kisses that had been showered on her there, and would fain have revived them even if they should now prove the last that Gérard would bestow on her.

But she would also have liked to see some sunlight playing over the youthful foliage. The ashen sky and threatening rain saddened her. And when she entered the private room she did not recognise it, so cold and dim it seemed with its faded furniture. Winter had tarried there, with all the dampness and mouldy smell peculiar to rooms which have long remained closed. Then, too, some of the wall paper which had come away from the plaster hung down in shreds, dead flies were scattered over the parquetry flooring; and in order to open the shutters the waiter had to engage in a perfect fight with their fastenings. However, when he had lighted a little gas stove, which at once flamed up and diffused some warmth, the room became more cosy.

Eve had seated herself on a chair, without raising the thick veil which hid her face. Gowned, gloved, and bonneted in black, as if she were already in mourning for her last passion, she showed naught of her own person save her superb fair hair, which glittered like a helm of tawny gold. She had ordered tea for two, and when the waiter brought it with a

little plateful of dry biscuits, left, no doubt, from the previous season, he found her in the same place, still veiled and motionless, absorbed, it seemed, in a gloomy reverie. If she had reached the café half an hour before the appointed time it was because she desired some leisure and opportunity to overcome her despair and compose herself. She resolved that of all things she would not weep, that she would remain dignified and speak calmly, like one who, whatever rights she might possess, preferred to appeal to reason only. And she was well pleased with the courage that she found within her. Whilst thinking of what she should say to dissuade Gérard from a marriage which to her mind would prove both a calamity and a blunder, she fancied herself very calm, indeed almost resigned to whatsoever might happen.

But all at once she started and began to tremble. Gérard was entering the room.

"What! are you here the first, my dear?" he exclaimed. "I thought that I myself was ten minutes before the time! And you've ordered some tea and are waiting for me!"

He forced a smile as he spoke, striving to display the same delight at seeing her as he had shown in the early golden days of their passion. But at heart he was much embarrassed, and he shuddered at the thought of the awful scene which he could foresee.

She had at last risen and raised her veil. And looking at him she stammered: "Yes, I found myself at liberty earlier than I expected. . . . I feared some impediment might arise . . . and so I came."

Then, seeing how handsome and how affectionate

he still looked, she could not restrain her passion. All her skilful arguments, all her fine resolutions, were swept away. Her flesh irresistibly impelled her towards him; she loved him, she would keep him, she would never surrender him to another. And she wildly flung her arms around his neck.

"Oh! Gérard, Gérard! I suffer too cruelly; I cannot, I cannot bear it! Tell me at once that you will not marry her, that you will never marry her!"

Her voice died away in a sob, tears started from her eyes. Ah! those tears which she had sworn she would never shed! They gushed forth without cessation, they streamed from her lovely eyes like a flood of the bitterest grief.

"My daughter, O God! What! you would marry my daughter! She, here, on your neck where I am now! No, no, such torture is past endurance, it must not be, I will not have it!"

He shivered as he heard that cry of frantic jealousy raised by a mother who now was but a woman, madened by the thought of her rival's youth, those five-and-twenty summers which she herself had left far behind. For his part, on his way to the assignation, he had come to what he thought the most sensible decision, resolving to break off the intercourse after the fashion of a well-bred man, with all sorts of fine consolatory speeches. But sternness was not in his nature. He was weak and soft-hearted, and had never been able to withstand a woman's tears. Nevertheless, he endeavoured to calm her, and in order to rid himself of her embrace, he made her sit down upon the sofa. And there, beside her, he replied: "Come,

be reasonable, my dear. We came here to have a friendly chat, did we not? I assure you that you are greatly exaggerating matters."

But she was determined to obtain a more positive answer from him. "No, no!" she retorted, "I am suffering too dreadfully, I must know the truth at once. Swear to me that you will never, never marry her!"

He again endeavoured to avoid replying as she wished him to do. "Come, come," he said, "you will do yourself harm by giving way to such grief as this; you know that I love you dearly."

"Then swear to me that you will never, never marry her."

"But I tell you that I love you, that you are the only one I love."

Then she again threw her arms around him, and kissed him passionately upon the eyes. "Is it true?" she asked in a transport. "You love me, you love no one else? Oh! tell me so again, and kiss me, and promise me that you will never belong to her."

Weak as he was he could not resist her ardent caresses and pressing entreaties. There came a moment of supreme cowardice and passion; her arms were around him and he forgot all but her, again and again repeating that he loved none other, and would never, never marry her daughter. At last he even sank so low as to pretend that he simply regarded that poor, infirm creature with pity. His words of compassionate disdain for her rival were like nectar to Eve, for they filled her with the blissful idea that

it was she herself who would ever remain beautiful in his eyes and whom he would ever love. . . .

At last silence fell between them, like an inevitable reaction after such a tempest of despair and passion. It disturbed Gérard. "Won't you drink some tea?" he asked. "It is almost cold already."

She was not listening, however. To her the reaction had come in a different form; and as though the inevitable explanation were only now commencing, she began to speak in a sad and weary voice. "My dear Gérard, you really cannot marry my daughter. In the first place it would be so wrong, and then there is the question of your name, your position. Forgive my frankness, but the fact is that everybody would say that you had sold yourself—such a marriage would be a scandal for both your family and mine."

As she spoke she took hold of his hands, like a mother seeking to prevent her big son from committing some terrible blunder. And he listened to her, with bowed head and averted eyes. She now evinced no anger, no jealous rage; all such feelings seemed to have departed with the rapture of her passion.

"Just think of what people would say," she continued. "I don't deceive myself, I am fully aware that there is an abyss between your circle of society and ours. It is all very well for us to be rich, but money simply enlarges the gap. And it was all very fine for me to be converted, my daughter is none the less 'the daughter of the Jewess,' as folks so often say. Ah! my Gérard, I am so proud of you, that it would rend my heart to see you lowered, degraded almost, by a marriage for money with a girl who is deformed,

who is unworthy of you and whom you could never love."

He raised his eyes and looked at her entreatingly, anxious as he was to be spared such painful talk. "But haven't I sworn to you, that you are the only one I love?" he said. "Haven't I sworn that I would never marry her! It's all over. Don't let us torture ourselves any longer."

Their glances met and lingered on one another, instinct with all the misery which they dared not express in words. Eve's face had suddenly aged; her eyelids were red and swollen, and blotches marbled her quivering cheeks, down which her tears again began to trickle. "My poor, poor Gérard," said she, "how heavily I weigh on you. Oh! do not deny it! I feel that I am an intolerable burden on your shoulders, an impediment in your life, and that I shall bring irreparable disaster on you by my obstinacy in wishing you to be mine alone."

He tried to speak, but she silenced him. "No, no, all is over between us. I am growing ugly, all is ended. And besides, I shut off the future from you. I can be of no help to you, whereas you bestow all on me. And yet the time has come for you to assure yourself a position. At your age you can't continue living without any certainty of the morrow, without a home and hearth of your own; and it would be cowardly and cruel of me to set myself up as an obstacle, and prevent you from ending your life happily, as I should do if I clung to you and dragged you down with me."

Gazing at him through her tears she continued

speaking in this fashion. Like his mother she was well aware that he was weak and even sickly; and she therefore dreamt of arranging a quiet life for him, a life of tranquil happiness free from all fear of want. She loved him so fondly; and possessed so much genuine kindness of heart that perhaps it might be possible for her to rise even to renunciation and sacrifice. Moreover, the very egotism born of her beauty suggested that it might be well for her to think of retirement and not allow the autumn of her life to be spoilt by torturing dramas. All this she said to him, treating him like a child whose happiness she wished to ensure even at the price of her own; and he, his eyes again lowered, listened without further protest, pleased indeed to let her arrange a happy life for him.

Examining the situation from every aspect, she at last began to recapitulate the points in favour of that abominable marriage, the thought of which had so intensely distressed her. "It is certain," she said, "that Camille would bring you all that I should like you to have. With her, I need hardly say it, would come plenty, affluence. And as for the rest, well, I do not wish to excuse myself or you, but I could name twenty households in which there have been worse things. Besides, I was wrong when I said that money opened a gap between people. On the contrary, it draws them nearer together, it secures forgiveness for every fault; so nobody would dare to blame you, there would only be jealous ones around you, dazzled by your good fortune."

Gérard rose, apparently rebelling once more.

"Surely," said he, "*you* don't insist on my marrying your daughter?"

"Ah! no indeed! But I am sensible, and I tell you what I ought to tell you. You must think it all over."

"I have done so already. It is you that I have loved, and that I love still. What you say is impossible."

She smiled divinely, rose, and again embraced him. "How good and kind you are, my Gérard. Ah! if you only knew how *I* love you, how I shall always love you, whatever happens."

Then she again began to weep, and even he shed tears. Their good faith was absolute; tender of heart as they were, they sought to delay the painful wrenching and tried to hope for further happiness. But they were conscious that the marriage was virtually an accomplished fact. Only tears and words were left them, while life and destiny were marching on. And if their emotion was so acute it was probably because they felt that this was the last time they would meet as lovers. Still they strove to retain the illusion that they were not exchanging their last farewell, that their lips would some day meet again in a kiss of rapture.

Eve removed her arms from the young man's neck, and they both gazed round the room, at the sofa, the table, the four chairs, and the little hissing gas-stove. The moist, hot atmosphere was becoming quite oppressive.

"And so," said Gérard, "you won't drink a cup of tea?"

"No, it's so horrid here," she answered, while arranging her hair in front of the looking-glass.

At that parting moment the mournfulness of this place, where she had hoped to find such delightful memories, filled her with distress, which was turning to positive anguish, when she suddenly heard an uproar of gruff voices and heavy feet. People were hastening along the passage and knocking at the doors. And, on darting to the window, she perceived a number of policemen surrounding the chalet. At this the wildest ideas assailed her. Had her daughter employed somebody to follow her? Did her husband wish to divorce her so as to marry Silviane? The scandal would be awful, and all her plans must crumble! She waited in dismay, white like a ghost; while Gérard, also paling and quivering, begged her to be calm. At last, when loud blows were dealt upon the door and a Commissary of Police enjoined them to open it, they were obliged to do so. Ah! what a moment, and what dismay and shame!

Meantime, for more than an hour, Pierre and Guillaume had been waiting for the rain to cease. Seated in a corner of the glazed verandah they talked in undertones of Barthès' painful affair, and ultimately decided to ask Théophile Morin to dine with them on the following evening, and inform his old friend that he must again go into exile.

"That is the best course," repeated Guillaume. "Morin is very fond of him and will know how to break the news. I have no doubt too that he will go with him as far as the frontier."

Pierre sadly looked at the falling rain. "Ah! what

a choice," said he, "to be ever driven to a foreign land under penalty of being thrust into prison. Poor fellow! how awful it is to have never known a moment of happiness and gaiety in one's life, to have devoted one's whole existence to the idea of liberty, and to see it scoffed at and expire with oneself!"

Then the priest paused, for he saw several policemen and keepers approach the café and prowl round it. Having lost scent of the man they were hunting, they had retraced their steps with the conviction no doubt that he had sought refuge in the chalet. And in order that he might not again escape them, they now took every precaution, exerted all their skill in surrounding the place before venturing on a minute search. Covert fear came upon Pierre and Guillaume when they noticed these proceedings. It seemed to them that it must all be connected with the chase which they had caught a glimpse of some time previously. Still, as they happened to be in the chalet they might be called upon to give their names and addresses. At this thought they glanced at one another, and almost made up their minds to go off under the rain. But they realised that anything like flight might only compromise them the more. So they waited; and all at once there came a diversion, for two fresh customers entered the establishment.

A victoria with its hood and apron raised had just drawn up outside the door. The first to alight from it was a young, well-dressed man with a bored expression of face. He was followed by a young woman who was laughing merrily, as if much amused by the persistence of the downpour. By way of jesting, indeed,

she expressed her regret that she had not come to the Bois on her bicycle, whereupon her companion retorted that to drive about in a deluge appeared to him the height of idiocy.

"But we were bound to go somewhere, my dear fellow," she gaily answered. "Why didn't you take me to see the maskers?"

"The maskers, indeed! No, no, my dear. I prefer the Bois, and even the bottom of the lake, to them."

Then, as the couple entered the chalet, Pierre saw that the young woman who made merry over the rain was little Princess Rosemonde, while her companion, who regarded the mid-Lent festivities as horrible, and bicycling as an utterly unæsthetic amusement, was handsome Hyacinthe Duvillard. On the previous evening, while they were taking a cup of tea together on their return from the Chamber of Horrors, the young man had responded to the Princess's blandishments by declaring that the only form of attachment he believed in was a mystic union of intellects and souls. And as such a union could only be fittingly arrived at amidst the cold, chaste snow, they had decided that they would start for Christiania on the following Monday. Their chief regret was that by the time they reached the fiords the worst part of the northern winter would be over.

They sat down in the café and ordered some kûmmel, but there was none, said the waiter, so they had to content themselves with common anisette. Then Hyacinthe, who had been a schoolfellow of Guillaume's sons, recognised both him and Pierre; and leaning

towards Rosemonde told her in a whisper who the elder brother was.

Thereupon, with sudden enthusiasm, she sprang to her feet: "Guillaume Froment, indeed! the great chemist!" And stepping forward with arm outstretched, she continued: "Ah! monsieur, you must excuse me, but I really must shake hands with you. I have so much admiration for you! You have done such wonderful work in connection with explosives!" Then, noticing the chemist's astonishment, she again burst into a laugh: "I am the Princess de Harn, your brother Abbé Froment knows me, and I ought to have asked him to introduce me. However, we have mutual friends, you and I; for instance, Monsieur Janzen, a very distinguished man, as you are aware. He was to have taken me to see you, for I am a modest disciple of yours. Yes, I have given some attention to chemistry, oh! from pure zeal for truth and in the hope of helping good causes, not otherwise. So you will let me call on you — won't you? — directly I come back from Christiania, where I am going with my young friend here, just to acquire some experience of unknown emotions."

In this way she rattled on, never allowing the others an opportunity to say a word. And she mingled one thing with another; her cosmopolitan tastes, which had thrown her into Anarchism and the society of shady adventurers; her new passion for mysticism and symbolism; her belief that the ideal must triumph over base materialism; her taste for æsthetic verse; and her dream of some unimagined rapture when Hyacinthe should kiss her with his frigid lips in a realm of eternal snow.

All at once, however, she stopped short and again began to laugh. "Dear me!" she exclaimed. "What are those policemen looking for here? Have they come to arrest us? How amusing it would be!"

Police Commissary Dupot and detective Mondésir had just made up their minds to search the café, as their men had hitherto failed to find Salvat in any of the out-buildings. They were convinced that he was here. Dupot, a thin, bald, short-sighted, spectacled little man, wore his usual expression of boredom and weariness; but in reality he was very wide awake and extremely courageous. He himself carried no weapons; but, as he anticipated a most violent resistance, such as might be expected from a trapped wolf, he advised Mondésir to have his revolver ready. From considerations of hierarchical respect, however, the detective, who with his snub nose and massive figure had much the appearance of a bull-dog, was obliged to let his superior enter first.

From behind his spectacles the Commissary of Police quickly scrutinized the four customers whom he found in the café: the lady, the priest, and the two other men. And passing them in a disdainful way, he at once made for the stairs, intending to inspect the upper floor. Thereupon the waiter, frightened by the sudden intrusion of the police, lost his head and stammered: "But there's a lady and gentleman upstairs in one of the private rooms."

Dupot quietly pushed him aside. "A lady and gentleman, that's not what we are looking for. . . . Come, make haste, open all the doors, you mustn't leave a cupboard closed."

Then climbing to the upper floor, he and Mondésir explored in turn every apartment and corner till they at last reached the room where Eve and Gérard were together. Here the waiter was unable to admit them, as the door was bolted inside. "Open the door!" he called through the keyhole, "it isn't you that they want!"

At last the bolt was drawn back, and Dupot, without even venturing to smile, allowed the trembling lady and gentleman to go downstairs, while Mondésir, entering the room, looked under every article of furniture, and even peeped into a little cupboard in order that no neglect might be imputed to him.

Meantime, in the public room which they had to cross after descending the stairs, Eve and Gérard experienced fresh emotion; for people whom they knew were there, brought together by an extraordinary freak of chance. Although Eve's face was hidden by a thick veil, her eyes met her son's glance and she felt sure that he recognised her. What a fatality! He had so long a tongue and told his sister everything! Then, as the Count, in despair at such a scandal, hurried off with the Baroness to conduct her through the pouring rain to her cab, they both distinctly heard little Princess Rosemonde exclaim: "Why, that was Count de Quinsac! Who was the lady, do you know?" And as Hyacinthe, greatly put out, returned no answer, she insisted, saying: "Come, you must surely know her. Who was she, eh?"

"Oh! nobody. Some woman or other," he ended by replying.

Pierre, who had understood the truth, turned his

eyes away to hide his embarrassment. But all at once the scene changed. At the very moment when Commissary Dupot and detective Mondésir came downstairs again, after vainly exploring the upper floor, a loud shout was raised outside, followed by a noise of running and scrambling. Then Gascogne, the Chief of the Detective Force, who had remained in the rear of the chalet, continuing the search through the out-buildings, made his appearance, pushing before him a bundle of rags and mud, which two policemen held on either side. And this bundle was the man, the hunted man, who had just been discovered in the coach-house, inside a staved cask, covered with hay.

Ah! what a whoop of victory there was after that run of two hours' duration, that frantic chase which had left them all breathless and footsore! It had been the most exciting, the most savage of all sports — a man hunt! They had caught the man at last, and they pushed him, they dragged him, they belaboured him with blows. And he, the man, what a sorry prey he looked! A wreck, wan and dirty from having spent the night in a hole full of leaves, still soaked to his waist from having rushed through a stream, drenched too by the rain, bespattered with mire, his coat and trousers in tatters, his cap a mere shred, his legs and hands bleeding from his terrible rush through thickets bristling with brambles and nettles. There no longer seemed anything human about his face; his hair stuck to his moist temples, his blood-shot eyes protruded from their sockets; fright, rage, and suffering were all blended on his wasted, contracted face. Still it was he, the man, the quarry,

and they gave him another push, and he sank on one of the tables of the little café, still held and shaken, however, by the rough hands of the policemen.

Then Guillaume shuddered as if thunderstruck, and caught hold of Pierre's hand. At this the priest, who was looking on, suddenly understood the truth and also quivered. *Salvat!* the man was *Salvat!* It was *Salvat* whom they had seen rushing through the wood like a wild boar forced by the hounds. And it was *Salvat* who was there, now conquered and simply a filthy bundle. Then once more there came to Pierre, amidst his anguish, a vision of the errand girl lying yonder at the entrance of the Duvillard mansion, the pretty fair-haired girl whom the bomb had ripped and killed!

Dupot and Mondésir made haste to participate in Gascogne's triumph. To tell the truth, however, the man had offered no resistance; it was like a lamb that he had let the police lay hold of him. And since he had been in the café, still roughly handled, he had simply cast a weary and mournful glance around him.

At last he spoke, and the first words uttered by his hoarse, gasping voice were these: "I am hungry."

He was sinking with hunger and weariness. This was the third day that he had eaten nothing.

"Give him some bread," said Commissary Dupot to the waiter. "He can eat it while a cab is being fetched."

A policeman went off to find a vehicle. The rain had suddenly ceased falling, the clear ring of a bicyclist's bell was heard in the distance, some carriages

drove by, and under the pale sunrays life again came back to the Bois.

Meantime, Salvat had fallen gluttonously upon the hunk of bread which had been given him, and whilst he was devouring it with rapturous animal satisfaction, he perceived the four customers seated around. He seemed irritated by the sight of Hyacinthe and Rosemonde, whose faces expressed the mingled anxiety and delight they felt at thus witnessing the arrest of some bandit or other. But all at once his mournful, blood-shot eyes wavered, for to his intense surprise he had recognised Pierre and Guillaume. When he again looked at the latter it was with the submissive affection of a grateful dog, and as if he were once more promising that he would divulge nothing, whatever might happen.

At last he again spoke, as if addressing himself like a man of courage, both to Guillaume, from whom he had averted his eyes, and to others also, his comrades who were not there: "It was silly of me to run," said he. "I don't know why I did so. It's best that it should be all ended. I'm ready."

V

THE GAME OF POLITICS

ON reading the newspapers on the following morning Pierre and Guillaume were greatly surprised at not finding in them the sensational accounts of Salvat's arrest which they had expected. All they could discover was a brief paragraph in a column of general news, setting forth that some policemen on duty in the Bois de Boulogne had there arrested an Anarchist, who was believed to have played a part in certain recent occurrences. On the other hand, the papers gave a deal of space to the questions raised by Sagnier's fresh denunciations. There were innumerable articles on the African Railways scandal, and the great debate which might be expected at the Chamber of Deputies, should Mège, the Socialist member, really renew his interpellation, as he had announced his intention of doing.

As Guillaume's wrist was now fast healing, and nothing seemed to threaten him, he had already, on the previous evening, decided that he would return to Montmartre. The police had passed him by without apparently suspecting any responsibility on his part; and he was convinced that Salvat would keep silent. Pierre, however, begged him to wait a little longer, at any rate until the prisoner should have been interro-

gated by the investigating magistrate, by which time they would be able to judge the situation more clearly. Pierre, moreover, during his long stay at the Home Department on the previous morning, had caught a glimpse of certain things and overheard certain words which made him suspect some dim connection between Salvat's crime and the parliamentary crisis; and he therefore desired a settlement of the latter before Guillaume returned to his wonted life.

"Just listen," he said to his brother. "I am going to Morin's to ask him to come and dine here this evening, for it is absolutely necessary that Barthès should be warned of the fresh blow which is falling on him. And then I think I shall go to the Chamber, as I want to know what takes place there. After that, since you desire it, I will let you go back to your own home."

It was not more than half-past one when Pierre reached the Palais-Bourbon. It had occurred to him that Fonsègue would be able to secure him admittance to the meeting-hall, but in the vestibule he met General de Bozonnet, who happened to possess a couple of tickets. A friend of his, who was to have accompanied him, had, at the last moment, been unable to come. So widespread was the curiosity concerning the debate now near at hand, and so general were the predictions that it would prove a most exciting one, that the demand for tickets had been extremely keen during the last twenty-four hours. In fact Pierre would never have been able to obtain admittance if the General had not good-naturedly offered to take him in. As a matter of fact the old warrior was well pleased to have

somebody to chat with. He explained that he had simply come there to kill time, just as he might have killed it at a concert or a charity bazaar. However, like the ex-Legitimist and Bonapartist that he was, he had really come for the pleasure of feasting his eyes on the shameful spectacle of parliamentary ignominy.

When the General and Pierre had climbed the stairs, they were able to secure two front seats in one of the public galleries. Little Massot, who was already there, and who knew them both, placed one of them on his right and the other on his left. "I couldn't find a decent seat left in the press gallery," said he, "but I managed to get this place, from which I shall be able to see things properly. It will certainly be a big sitting. Just look at the number of people there are on every side!"

The narrow and badly arranged galleries were packed to overflowing. There were men of every age and a great many women too in the confused, serried mass of spectators, amidst which one only distinguished a multiplicity of pale white faces. The real scene, however, was down below in the meeting-hall, which was as yet empty, and with its rows of seats disposed in semi-circular fashion looked like the auditorium of a theatre. Under the cold light which fell from the glazed roofing appeared the solemn, shiny tribune, whence members address the Chamber, whilst behind it, on a higher level, and running right along the rear wall, was what is called the Bureau, with its various tables and seats, including the presidential armchair. The Bureau, like the tribune, was still unoccupied. The only persons one saw there were a couple of at-

tendants who were laying out new pens and filling inkstands.

"The women," said Massot with a laugh, after another glance at the galleries, "come here just as they might come to a menagerie, that is, in the secret hope of seeing wild beasts devour one another. But, by the way, did you read the article in the 'Voix du Peuple' this morning? What a wonderful fellow that Sagnier is? When nobody else can find any filth left, he manages to discover some. He apparently thinks it necessary to add something new every day, in order to send his sales up. And of course it all disturbs the public, and it's thanks to him that so many people have come here in the hope of witnessing some horrid scene."

Then he laughed again, as he asked Pierre if he had read an unsigned article in the "Globe," which in very dignified but perfidious language had called upon Barroux to give the full and frank explanations which the country had a right to demand in that matter of the African Railways. This paper had hitherto vigorously supported the President of the Council, but in the article in question the coldness which precedes a rupture was very apparent. Pierre replied that the article had much surprised him, for he had imagined that Fonsègue and Barroux were linked together by identity of views and long-standing personal friendship.

Massot was still laughing. "Quite so," said he. "And you may be sure that the governor's heart bled when he wrote that article. It has been much noticed, and it will do the government a deal of harm. But

the governor, you see, knows better than anybody else what line he ought to follow to save both his own position and the paper's."

Then he related what extraordinary confusion and emotion reigned among the deputies in the lobbies through which he had strolled before coming upstairs to secure a seat. After an adjournment of a couple of days the Chamber found itself confronted by this terrible scandal, which was like one of those conflagrations which, at the moment when they are supposed to be dying out, suddenly flare up again and devour everything. The various figures given in Sagnier's list, the two hundred thousand francs paid to Barroux, the eighty thousand handed to Monferand, the fifty thousand allotted to Fonsègue, the ten thousand pocketed by Duthil, and the three thousand secured by Chaigneux, with all the other amounts distributed among So-and-so and So-and-so, formed the general subject of conversation. And at the same time some most extraordinary stories were current; there was no end of tittle-tattle in which fact and falsehood were so inextricably mingled that everybody was at sea as to the real truth. Whilst many deputies turned pale and trembled as beneath a blast of terror, others passed by purple with excitement, bursting with delight, laughing with exultation at the thought of coming victory. For, in point of fact, beneath all the assumed indignation, all the calls for parliamentary cleanliness and morality, there simply lay a question of persons—the question of ascertaining whether the government would be overthrown, and in that event of whom the new adminis-

tration would consist. Barroux no doubt appeared to be in a bad way; but with things in such a muddle one was bound to allow a margin for the unexpected. From what was generally said it seemed certain that Mège would be extremely violent. Barroux would answer him, and the Minister's friends declared that he was determined to speak out in the most decisive manner. As for Monferrand he would probably address the Chamber after his colleague, but Vignon's intentions were somewhat doubtful, as, in spite of his delight, he made a pretence of remaining in the background. He had been seen going from one to another of his partisans, advising them to keep calm, in order that they might retain the cold, keen *coup d'œil* which in warfare generally decides the victory. Briefly, such was the plotting and intriguing that never had any witch's cauldron brimful of drugs and nameless abominations been set to boil on a more hellish fire than that of this parliamentary cook-shop.

"Heaven only knows what they will end by serving us," said little Massot by way of conclusion.

General de Bozonnet for his part anticipated nothing but disaster. If France had only possessed an army, said he, one might have swept away that handful of bribe-taking parliamentarians who preyed upon the country and rotted it. But there was no army left, there was merely an armed nation, a very different thing. And thereupon, like a man of a past age whom the present times distracted, he started on what had been his favourite subject of complaint ever since he had been retired from the service.

"Here's an idea for an article if you want one," he

said to Massot. "Although France may have a million soldiers she hasn't got an army. I'll give you some notes of mine, and you will be able to tell people the truth."

Warfare, he continued, ought to be purely and simply a caste occupation, with commanders designated by divine right, leading mercenaries or volunteers into action. By democratising warfare people had simply killed it; a circumstance which he deeply regretted, like a born soldier who regarded fighting as the only really noble occupation that life offered. For, as soon as it became every man's duty to fight, none was willing to do so; and thus compulsory military service—what was called "the nation in arms"—would, at a more or less distant date, certainly bring about the end of warfare. If France had not engaged in a European war since 1870 this was precisely due to the fact that everybody in France was ready to fight. But rulers hesitated to throw a whole nation against another nation, for the loss both in life and treasure would be tremendous. And so the thought that all Europe was transformed into a vast camp filled the General with anger and disgust. He sighed for the old times when men fought for the pleasure of the thing, just as they hunted; whereas nowadays people were convinced that they would exterminate one another at the very first engagement.

"But surely it wouldn't be an evil if war should disappear," Pierre gently remarked.

This somewhat angered the General. "Well, you'll have pretty nations if people no longer fight," he answered, and then trying to show a practical spirit,

he added: "Never has the art of war cost more money than since war itself has become an impossibility. The present-day defensive peace is purely and simply ruining every country in Europe. One may be spared defeat, but utter bankruptcy is certainly at the end of it all. And in any case the profession of arms is done for. All faith in it is dying out, and it will soon be forsaken, just as men have begun to forsake the priesthood."

Thereupon he made a gesture of mingled grief and anger, almost cursing that parliament, that Republican legislature before him, as if he considered it responsible for the future extinction of warfare. But little Massot was wagging his head dubiously, for he regarded the subject as rather too serious a one for him to write upon. And, all at once, in order to turn the conversation into another channel, he exclaimed: "Ah! there's Monseigneur Martha in the diplomatic gallery beside the Spanish Ambassador. It's denied, you know, that he intends to come forward as a candidate in Morbihan. He's far too shrewd to wish to be a deputy. He already pulls the strings which set most of the Catholic deputies who have 'rallied' to the Republican Government in motion."

Pierre himself had just noticed Monseigneur Martha's smiling face. And, somehow or other, however modest might be the prelate's demeanour, it seemed to him that he really played an important part in what was going on. He could hardly take his eyes from him. It was as if he expected that he would suddenly order men hither and thither, and direct the whole march of events.

"Ah!" said Massot again. "Here comes Mège. It won't be long now before the sitting begins."

The hall, down below, was gradually filling. Deputies entered and descended the narrow passages between the benches. Most of them remained standing and chatting in a more or less excited way; but some seated themselves and raised their grey, weary faces to the glazed roof. It was a cloudy afternoon, and rain was doubtless threatening, for the light became quite livid. If the hall was pompous it was also dismal with its heavy columns, its cold allegorical statues, and its stretches of bare marble and woodwork. The only brightness was that of the red velvet of the benches and the gallery hand-rests.

Every deputy of any consequence who entered was named by Massot to his companions. Mège, on being stopped by another member of the little Socialist group, began to fume and gesticulate. Then Vignon, detaching himself from a group of friends and putting on an air of smiling composure, descended the steps towards his seat. The occupants of the galleries, however, gave most attention to the accused members, those whose names figured in Sagnier's list. And these were interesting studies. Some showed themselves quite sprightly, as if they were entirely at their ease; but others had assumed a most grave and indignant demeanour. Chaigneux staggered and hesitated as if beneath the weight of some frightful act of injustice; whereas Duthil looked perfectly serene save for an occasional twitch of his lips. The most admired, however, was Fonsègue, who showed so candid a face, so open a glance, that his colleagues

as well as the spectators might well have declared him innocent. Nobody indeed could have looked more like an honest man.

"Ah! there's none like the governor," muttered Massot with enthusiasm. "But be attentive, for here come the ministers. One mustn't miss Barroux' meeting with Fonsègue, after this morning's article."

Chance willed it that as Barroux came along with his head erect, his face pale, and his whole demeanour aggressive, he was obliged to pass Fonsègue in order to reach the ministerial bench. In doing so he did not speak to him, but he gazed at him fixedly like one who is conscious of defection, of a cowardly stab in the back on the part of a traitor. Fonsègue seemed quite at ease, and went on shaking hands with one and another of his colleagues as if he were altogether unconscious of Barroux' glance. Nor did he even appear to see Monferrand, who walked by in the rear of the Prime Minister, wearing a placid good-natured air, as if he knew nothing of what was impending, but was simply coming to some ordinary humdrum sitting. However, when he reached his seat, he raised his eyes and smiled at Monseigneur Martha, who gently nodded to him. Then well pleased to think that things were going as he wished them to go, he began to rub his hands, as he often did by way of expressing his satisfaction.

"Who is that grey-haired, mournful-looking gentleman on the ministerial bench?" Pierre inquired of Massot.

"Why, that's Taboureau, the Minister of Public Instruction, the excellent gentleman who is said to

have no prestige. One's always hearing of him, and one never recognises him; he looks like an old, badly worn coin. Just like Barroux he can't feel very well pleased with the governor this afternoon, for to-day's 'Globe' contained an article pointing out his thorough incapacity in everything concerning the fine arts. It was an article in measured language, but all the more effective for that very reason. It would surprise me if Taboureau should recover from it."

Just then a low roll of drums announced the arrival of the President and other officials of the Chamber. A door opened, and a little procession passed by amidst an uproar of exclamations and hasty footsteps. Then, standing at his table, the President rang his bell and declared the sitting open. But few members remained silent, however, whilst one of the secretaries, a dark, lanky young man with a harsh voice, read the minutes of the previous sitting. When they had been adopted, various letters of apology for non-attendance were read, and a short, unimportant bill was passed without discussion. And then came the big affair, Mège's interpellation, and at once the whole Chamber was in a flutter, while the most passionate curiosity reigned in the galleries above. On the Government consenting to the interpellation, the Chamber decided that the debate should take place at once. And thereupon complete silence fell, save that now and again a brief quiver sped by, in which one could detect the various feelings, passions and appetites swaying the assembly.

Mège began to speak with assumed moderation, carefully setting forth the various points at issue

Tall and thin, gnarled and twisted like a vine-stock, he rested his hands on the tribune as if to support his bent figure, and his speech was often interrupted by the little dry cough which came from the tuberculosis that was burning him. But his eyes sparkled with passion behind his glasses, and little by little his voice rose in piercing accents and he drew his lank figure erect and began to gesticulate vehemently. He reminded the Chamber that some two months previously, at the time of the first denunciations published by the "*Voix du Peuple*," he had asked leave to interpellate the Government respecting that deplorable affair of the African Railways; and he remarked, truly enough, that if the Chamber had not yielded to certain considerations which he did not wish to discuss, and had not adjourned his proposed inquiries, full light would long since have been thrown on the whole affair, in such wise that there would have been no revival, no increase of the scandal, and no possible pretext for that abominable campaign of denunciation which tortured and disgusted the country. However, it had at last been understood that silence could be maintained no longer. It was necessary that the two ministers who were so loudly accused of having abused their trusts, should prove their innocence, throw full light upon all they had done; apart from which the Chamber itself could not possibly remain beneath the charge of wholesale venality.

Then he recounted the whole history of the affair, beginning with the grant of a concession for the African Lines to Baron Duvillard; and next passing to the proposals for the issue of lottery stock, which

proposals, it was now said, had only been sanctioned by the Chamber after the most shameful bargaining and buying of votes. At this point Mège became extremely violent. Speaking of that mysterious individual Hunter, Baron Duvillard's recruiter and go-between, he declared that the police had allowed him to flee from France, much preferring to spend its time in shadowing Socialist deputies. Then, hammering the tribune with his fist, he summoned Barroux to give a categorical denial to the charges brought against him, and to make it absolutely clear that he had never received a single copper of the two hundred thousand francs specified in Hunter's list. Forthwith certain members shouted to Mège that he ought to read the whole list; but when he wished to do so others vociferated that it was abominable, that such a mendacious and slanderous document ought not to be accorded a place in the proceedings of the French legislature. Mège went on still in frantic fashion, figuratively casting Sagnier into the gutter, and protesting that there was nothing in common between himself and such a base insulter. But at the same time he demanded that justice and punishment should be meted out equally to one and all, and that if indeed there were any bribe-takers among his colleagues, they should be sent that very night to the prison of Mazas.

Meantime the President, erect at his table, rang and rang his bell without managing to quell the uproar. He was like a pilot who finds the tempest too strong for him. Among all the men with purple faces and barking mouths who were gathered in front of him, the ushers alone maintained imperturbable gravity.

At intervals between the bursts of shouting, Mège's voice could still be heard. By some sudden transition he had come to the question of a Collectivist organisation of society such as he dreamt of, and he contrasted it with the criminal capitalist society of the present day, which alone, said he, could produce such scandals. And yielding more and more to his apostolic fervour, declaring that there could be no salvation apart from Collectivism, he shouted that the day of triumph would soon dawn. He awaited it with a smile of confidence. In his opinion, indeed, he merely had to overthrow that ministry and perhaps another one, and then he himself would at last take the reins of power in hand, like a reformer who would know how to pacify the nation. As outside Socialists often declared, it was evident that the blood of a dictator flowed in that sectarian's veins. His feverish, stubborn rhetoric ended by exhausting his interrupters, who were compelled to listen to him. When he at last decided to leave the tribune, loud applause arose from a few benches on the left.

"Do you know," said Massot to the General, "I met Mège taking a walk with his three little children in the Jardin des Plantes the other day. He looked after them as carefully as an old nurse. I believe he's a very worthy fellow at heart, and lives in a very modest way."

But a quiver had now sped through the assembly. Barroux had quitted his seat to ascend the tribune. He there drew himself erect, throwing his head back after his usual fashion. There was a haughty, majestic, slightly sorrowful expression on his handsome

face, which would have been perfect had his nose only been a little larger. He began to express his sorrow and indignation in fine flowery language, which he punctuated with theatrical gestures. His eloquence was that of a tribune of the romantic school, and as one listened to him one could divine that in spite of all his pomposity he was really a worthy, tender-hearted and somewhat foolish man. That afternoon he was stirred by genuine emotion; his heart bled at the thought of his disastrous destiny, he felt that a whole world was crumbling with himself. Ah! what a cry of despair he stifled, the cry of the man who is buffeted and thrown aside by the course of events on the very day when he thinks that his civic devotion entitles him to triumph! To have given himself and all he possessed to the cause of the Republic, even in the dark days of the Second Empire; to have fought and struggled and suffered persecution for that Republic's sake; to have established that Republic amidst the battle of parties, after all the horrors of national and civil war; and then, when the Republic at last triumphed and became a living fact, secure from all attacks and intrigues, to suddenly feel like a survival of some other age, to hear new comers speak a new language, preach a new ideal, and behold the collapse of all he had loved, all he had revered, all that had given him strength to fight and conquer! The mighty artisans of the early hours were no more; it had been meet that Gambetta should die. How bitter it all was for the last lingering old ones to find themselves among the men of the new, intelligent and shrewd generation, who gently smiled at them, deem-

ing their romanticism quite out of fashion! All crumbled since the ideal of liberty collapsed, since liberty was no longer the one desideratum, the very basis of the Republic whose existence had been so dearly purchased after so long an effort!

Erect and dignified Barroux made his confession. The Republic to him was like the sacred ark of life; the very worst deeds became saintly if they were employed to save her from peril. And in all simplicity he told his story, how he had found the great bulk of Baron Duvillard's money going to the opposition newspapers as pretended payment for puffery and advertising, whilst on the other hand the Republican organs received but beggarly, trumpery amounts. He had been Minister of the Interior at the time, and had therefore had charge of the press; so what would have been said of him if he had not endeavoured to re-establish some equilibrium in this distribution of funds in order that the adversaries of the institutions of the country might not acquire a great increase of strength by appropriating all the sinews of war? Hands had been stretched out towards him on all sides, a score of newspapers, the most faithful, the most meritorious, had claimed their legitimate share. And he had ensured them that share by distributing among them the two hundred thousand francs set down in the list against his name. Not a centime of the money had gone into his own pocket, he would allow nobody to impugn his personal honesty, on that point his word must suffice. At that moment Barroux was really grand. All his emphatic pomposity disappeared; he showed himself, as he really was — an

honest man, quivering, his heart bared, his conscience bleeding, in his bitter distress at having been among those who had laboured and at now being denied reward.

For, truth to tell, his words fell amidst icy silence. In his childish simplicity he had anticipated an outburst of enthusiasm; a Republican Chamber could but acclaim him for having saved the Republic; and now the frigidity of one and all quite froze him. He suddenly felt that he was all alone, done for, touched by the hand of death. Nevertheless, he continued speaking amidst that terrible silence with the courage of one who is committing suicide, and who, from his love of noble and eloquent attitudes, is determined to die standing. He ended with a final impressive gesture. However, as he came down from the tribune, the general coldness seemed to increase, not a single member applauded. With supreme clumsiness he had alluded to the secret scheming of Rome and the clergy, whose one object, in his opinion, was to recover the predominant position they had lost and restore monarchy in France at a more or less distant date.

"How silly of him! Ought a man ever to confess?" muttered Massot. "He's done for, and the ministry too!"

Then, amidst the general frigidity, Monferrand boldly ascended the tribune stairs. The prevailing uneasiness was compounded of all the secret fear which sincerity always causes, of all the distress of the bribe-taking deputies who felt that they were rolling into an abyss, and also of the embarrassment which the others felt at thought of the more or less

justifiable compromises of politics. Something like relief, therefore, came when Monferrand started with the most emphatic denials, protesting in the name of his outraged honour, and dealing blow after blow on the tribune with one hand, while with the other he smote his chest. Short and thick-set, with his face thrust forward, hiding his shrewdness beneath an expression of indignant frankness, he was for a moment really superb. He denied everything. He was not only ignorant of what was meant by that sum of eighty thousand francs set down against his name, but he defied the whole world to prove that he had even touched a single copper of that money. He boiled over with indignation to such a point that he did not simply deny bribe-taking on his own part, he denied it on behalf of the whole assembly, of all present and past French legislatures, as if, indeed, bribe-taking on the part of a representative of the people was altogether too monstrous an idea, a crime that surpassed possibility to such an extent that the mere notion of it was absurd. And thereupon applause rang out; the Chamber, delivered from its fears, thrilled by his words, acclaimed him.

From the little Socialist group, however, some jeers arose, and voices summoned Monferrand to explain himself on the subject of the African Railways, reminding him that he had been at the head of the Public Works Department at the time of the vote, and requiring of him that he should state what he now meant to do, as Minister of the Interior, in order to reassure the country. He juggled with this question, declaring that if there were any guilty parties

they would be punished, for he did not require anybody to remind him of his duty. And then, all at once, with incomparable maestria, he had recourse to the diversion which he had been preparing since the previous day. His duty, said he, was a thing which he never forgot; he discharged it like a faithful soldier of the nation hour by hour, and with as much vigilance as prudence. He had been accused of employing the police on he knew not what base spying work in such wise as to allow the man Hunter to escape. Well, as for that much-slandered police force, he would tell the Chamber on what work he had really employed it the day before, and how zealously it had laboured for the cause of law and order. In the Bois de Boulogne, on the previous afternoon, it had arrested that terrible scoundrel, the perpetrator of the crime in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, that Anarchist mechanician Salvat, who for six weeks past had so cunningly contrived to elude capture. The scoundrel had made a full confession during the evening, and the law would now take its course with all despatch. Public morality was at last avenged, Paris might now emerge in safety from its long spell of terror, Anarchism would be struck down, annihilated. And that was what he, Monferrand, had done as a Minister for the honour and safety of his country, whilst villains were vainly seeking to dishonour him by inscribing his name on a list of infamy, the outcome of the very basest political intrigues.

The Chamber listened agape and quivering. This story of Salvat's arrest, which none of the morning papers had reported; the present which Monferrand

seemed to be making them of that terrible Anarchist whom many had already begun to regard as a myth; the whole *mise-en-scène* of the Minister's speech transported the deputies as if they were suddenly witnessing the finish of a long-interrupted drama. Stirred and flattered, they prolonged their applause, while Monferrand went on celebrating his act of energy, how he had saved society, how crime should be punished, and how he himself would ever prove that he had a strong arm and could answer for public order. He even won favour with the Conservatives and Clericals on the Right by separating himself from Barroux, addressing a few words of sympathy to those Catholics who had "rallied" to the Republic, and appealing for concord among men of different beliefs in order that they might fight the common enemy, that fierce, wild socialism which talked of overthrowing everything!

By the time Monferrand came down from the tribune, the trick was played, he had virtually saved himself. Both the Right and Left of the Chamber¹

¹ Ever since the days of the Bourbon Restoration it has been the practice in the French Chambers for the more conservative members to seat themselves on the President's right, and for the Radical ones to place themselves on his left. The central seats of the semi-circle in which the members' seats are arranged in tiers are usually occupied by men of moderate views. Generally speaking, such terms as Right Centre and Left Centre are applied to groups of Moderates inclining in the first place to Conservatism and in the latter to Radicalism. All this is of course known to readers acquainted with French institutions, but I give the explanation because others, after perusing French news in some daily paper, have often asked me what was meant by "a deputy of the Right," and so forth. — *Trans.*

applauded, drowning the protests of the few Socialists whose vociferations only added to the triumphal tumult. Members eagerly stretched out their hands to the Minister, who for a moment remained standing there and smiling. But there was some anxiety in that smile of his; his success was beginning to frighten him. Had he spoken too well, and saved the entire Cabinet instead of merely saving himself? That would mean the ruin of his plan. The Chamber ought not to vote under the effect of that speech which had thrilled it so powerfully. Thus Monferrand, though he still continued to smile, spent a few anxious moments in waiting to see if anybody would rise to answer him.

His success had been as great among the occupants of the galleries as among the deputies themselves. Several ladies had been seen applauding, and Monseigneur Martha had given unmistakable signs of the liveliest satisfaction. "Ah, General!" said Massot to Bozonnet in a sneering way. "Those are our fighting men of the present time. And he's a bold and strong one, is Monferrand. Of course it is all what people style 'saving one's bacon,' but none the less it's very clever work."

Just then, however, Monferrand to his great satisfaction had seen Vignon rise from his seat in response to the urging of his friends. And thereupon all anxiety vanished from the Minister's smile, which became one of malicious placidity.

The very atmosphere of the Chamber seemed to change with Vignon in the tribune. He was slim, with a fair and carefully tended beard, blue eyes and

all the suppleness of youth. He spoke, moreover, like a practical man, in simple, straightforward language, which made the emptiness of the other's declamatory style painfully conspicuous. His term of official service as a prefect in the provinces had endowed him with keen insight; and it was in an easy way that he propounded and unravelled the most intricate questions. Active and courageous, confident in his own star, too young and too shrewd to have compromised himself in anything so far, he was steadily marching towards the future. He had already drawn up a rather more advanced political programme than that of Barroux and Monferrand, so that when opportunity offered there might be good reasons for him to take their place. Moreover, he was quite capable of carrying out his programme by attempting some of the long-promised reforms for which the country was waiting. He had guessed that honesty, when it had prudence and shrewdness as its allies, must some day secure an innings. In a clear voice, and in a very quiet, deliberate way, he now said what it was right to say on the subject under discussion, the things that common sense dictated and that the Chamber itself secretly desired should be said. He was certainly the first to rejoice over an arrest which would reassure the country; but he failed to understand what connection there could be between that arrest and the sad business that had been brought before the Chamber. The two affairs were quite distinct and different, and he begged his colleagues not to vote in the state of excitement in which he saw them. Full light must be thrown on the African Railways question, and this,

one could not expect from the two incriminated ministers. However, he was opposed to any suggestion of a committee of inquiry. In his opinion the guilty parties, if such there were, ought to be brought immediately before a court of law. And, like Barroux, he wound up with a discreet allusion to the growing influence of the clergy, declaring that he was against all unworthy compromises, and was equally opposed to any state dictatorship and any revival of the ancient theocratic spirit.

Although there was but little applause when Vignon returned to his seat, it was evident that the Chamber was again master of its emotions. And the situation seemed so clear, and the overthrow of the ministry so certain, that Mège, who had meant to reply to the others, wisely abstained from doing so. Meantime people noticed the placid demeanour of Monferrand, who had listened to Vignon with the utmost complacency, as if he were rendering homage to an adversary's talent; whereas Barroux, ever since the cold silence which had greeted his speech, had remained motionless in his seat, bowed down and pale as a corpse.

"Well, it's all over," resumed Massot, amidst the hubbub which arose as the deputies prepared to vote; "the ministry's done for. Little Vignon will go a long way, you know. People say that he dreams of the Elysée. At all events everything points to him as our next prime minister."

Then, as the journalist rose, intending to go off, the General detained him: "Wait a moment, Monsieur Massot," said he. "How disgusting all that parlia-

mentary cooking is! You ought to point it out in an article, and show people how the country is gradually being weakened and rotted to the marrow by all such useless and degrading discussions. Why, a great battle resulting in the loss of 50,000 men would exhaust us less than ten years of this abominable parliamentary system. You must call on me some morning. I will show you a scheme of military reform, in which I point out the necessity of returning to the limited professional armies which we used to have, for this present-day national army, as folks call it, which is a semi-civilian affair and at best a mere herd of men, is like a dead weight on us, and is bound to pull us down!"

Pierre, for his part, had not spoken a word since the beginning of the debate. He had listened to everything, at first influenced by the thought of his brother's interests, and afterwards mastered by the feverishness which gradually took possession of everybody present. He had become convinced that there was nothing more for Guillaume to fear; but how curiously did one event fit into another, and how loudly had Salvat's arrest re-echoed in the Chamber! Looking down into the seething hall below him, he had detected all the clash of rival passions and interests. After watching the great struggle between Barroux, Monferrand and Vignon, he had gazed upon the childish delight of that terrible Socialist Mège, who was so pleased at having been able to stir up the depths of those troubled waters, in which he always unwittingly angled for the benefit of others. Then, too, Pierre had become interested in Fonsègue, who,

knowing what had been arranged between Monferrand, Duvillard and himself, evinced perfect calmness and strove to reassure Duthil and Chaigneux, who, on their side, were quite dismayed by the ministry's impending fall. Yet, Pierre's eyes always came back to Monseigneur Martha. He had watched his serene smiling face throughout the sitting, striving to detect his impressions of the various incidents that had occurred, as if in his opinion that dramatic parliamentary comedy had only been played as a step towards the more or less distant triumph for which the prelate laboured. And now, while awaiting the result of the vote, as Pierre turned towards Massot and the General, he found that they were talking of nothing but recruiting and tactics and the necessity of a bath of blood for the whole of Europe. Ah! poor mankind, ever fighting and ever devouring one another in parliaments as well as on battle-fields, when, thought Pierre, would it decide to disarm once and for all, and live at peace according to the laws of justice and reason!

Then he again looked down into the hall, where the greatest confusion was prevailing among the deputies with regard to the coming vote. There was quite a rainfall of suggested "resolutions," from a very violent one proposed by Mège, to another, which was merely severe, emanating from Vignon. The ministry, however, would only accept the "Order of the day pure and simple," a mere decision, that is, to pass to the next business, as if Mège's interpellation had been unworthy of attention. And presently the Government was defeated, Vignon's resolution being

adopted by a majority of twenty-five. Some portion of the Left had evidently joined hands with the Right and the Socialist group. A prolonged hubbub followed this result.

"Well, so we are to have a Vignon Cabinet," said Massot, as he went off with Pierre and the General. "All the same, though, Monferrand has saved himself, and if I were in Vignon's place I should distrust him."

That evening there was a very touching farewell scene at the little house at Neuilly. When Pierre returned thither from the Chamber, saddened but reassured with regard to the future, Guillaume at once made up his mind to go home on the morrow. And as Nicholas Barthès was compelled to leave, the little dwelling seemed on the point of relapsing into dreary quietude once more.

Théophile Morin, whom Pierre had informed of the painful alternative in which Barthès was placed, duly came to dinner; but he did not have time to speak to the old man before they all sat down to table at seven o'clock. As usual Barthès had spent his day in marching, like a caged lion, up and down the room in which he had accepted shelter after the fashion of a big fearless child, who never worried with regard either to his present circumstances or the troubles which the future might have in store for him. His life had ever been one of unlimited hope, which reality had ever shattered. Although all that he had loved, all that he had hoped to secure by fifty years of imprisonment or exile, — liberty, equality and a real brotherly republic, — had hitherto failed to come,

such as he had dreamt of them, he nevertheless retained the candid faith of his youth, and was ever confident in the near future. He would smile indulgently when new comers, men of violent ideas, derided him and called him a poor old fellow. For his part, he could make neither head nor tail of the many new sects. He simply felt indignant with their lack of human feeling, and stubbornly adhered to his own idea of basing the world's regeneration on the simple proposition that men were naturally good and ought to be free and brotherly.

That evening at dinner, feeling that he was with friends who cared for him, Barthès proved extremely gay, and showed all his ingenuousness in talking of his ideal, which would soon be realised, said he, in spite of everything. He could tell a story well whenever he cared to chat, and on that occasion he related some delightful anecdotes about the prisons through which he had passed. He knew all the dungeons, Ste. Pélagie and Mont St. Michel, Belle-Ile-en-Mer and Clairvaux, to say nothing of temporary gaols and the evil-smelling hulks on board which political prisoners are often confined. And he still laughed at certain recollections, and related how in the direst circumstances he had always been able to seek refuge in his conscience. The others listened to him quite charmed by his conversation, but full of anguish at the thought that this perpetual prisoner or exile must again rise and take his staff to sally forth, driven from his native land once more.

Pierre did not speak out until they were partaking of dessert. Then he related how the Minister had

written to him, and how in a brief interview he had stated that Barthès must cross the frontier within forty-eight hours if he did not wish to be arrested. Thereupon the old man gravely rose, with his white fleece, his eagle beak and his bright eyes still sparkling with the fire of youth. And he wished to go off at once. "What!" said he, "you have known all this since yesterday, and have still kept me here at the risk of my compromising you even more than I had done already! You must forgive me, I did not think of the worry I might cause you, I thought that everything would be satisfactorily arranged. I must thank you both — yourself and Guillaume — for the few days of quietude that you have procured to an old vagabond and madman like myself."

Then, as they tried to prevail on him to remain until the following morning, he would not listen to them. There would be a train for Brussels about midnight, and he had ample time to take it. He refused to let Morin accompany him. No, no, said he, Morin was not a rich man, and moreover he had work to attend to. Why should he take him away from his duties, when it was so easy, so simple, for him to go off alone? He was going back into exile as into misery and grief which he had long known, like some Wandering Jew of Liberty, ever driven onward through the world.

When he took leave of the others at ten o'clock, in the little sleepy street just outside the house, tears suddenly dimmed his eyes. "Ah! I'm no longer a young man," he said; "it's all over this time. I shall never come back again. My bones will rest in

some corner over yonder." And yet, after he had affectionately embraced Pierre and Guillaume, he drew himself up like one who remained unconquered, and he raised a supreme cry of hope. "But after all, who knows? Triumph may perhaps come to-morrow. The future belongs to those who prepare it and wait for it!"

Then he walked away, and long after he had disappeared his firm, sonorous footsteps could be heard re-echoing in the quiet night.

BOOK IV

I

PIERRE AND MARIE

ON the mild March morning when Pierre left his little house at Neuilly to accompany Guillaume to Montmartre, he was oppressed by the thought that on returning home he would once more find himself alone with nothing to prevent him from relapsing into negation and despair. The idea of this had kept him from sleeping, and he still found it difficult to hide his distress and force a smile.

The sky was so clear and the atmosphère so mild that the brothers had resolved to go to Montmartre on foot by way of the outer boulevards. Nine o'clock was striking when they set out. Guillaume for his part was very gay at the thought of the surprise he would give his family. It was as if he were suddenly coming back from a long journey. He had not warned them of his intentions; he had merely written to them now and again to tell them that he was recovering, and they certainly had no idea that his return was so near at hand.

When Guillaume and Pierre had climbed the sunlit slopes of Montmartre, and crossed the quiet country-fied Place du Tertre, the former, by means of a latch-key, quietly opened the door of his house, which seemed to be asleep, so profound was the stillness

both around and within it. Pierre found it the same as on the occasion of his previous and only visit. First came the narrow passage which ran through the ground-floor, affording a view of all Paris at the further end. Next there was the garden, reduced to a couple of plum-trees and a clump of lilac-bushes, the leaves of which had now sprouted. And this time the priest perceived three bicycles leaning against the trees. Beyond them stood the large work-shop, so gay, and yet so peaceful, with its huge window overlooking a sea of roofs.

Guillaume had reached the work-shop without meeting anybody. With an expression of much amusement he raised a finger to his lips. "Attention, Pierre," he whispered; "you'll just see!"

Then having noiselessly opened the door, they remained for a moment on the threshold.

The three sons alone were there. Near his forge stood Thomas working a boring machine, with which he was making some holes in a small brass plate. Then François and Antoine were seated on either side of their large table, the former reading, and the latter finishing a block. The bright sunshine streamed in, playing over all the seeming disorder of the room, where so many callings and so many implements found place. A large bunch of wallflowers bloomed on the women's work-table near the window; and absorbed as the young men were in their respective tasks the only sound was the slight hissing of the boring machine each time that the eldest of them drilled another hole.

However, although Guillaume did not stir, there suddenly came a quiver, an awakening. His sons

seemed to guess his presence, for they raised their heads, each at the same moment. From each, too, came the same cry, and a common impulse brought them first to their feet and then to his arms.

“Father!”

Guillaume embraced them, feeling very happy. And that was all; there was no long spell of emotion, no useless talk. It was as if he had merely gone out the day before and, delayed by business, had now come back. Still, he looked at them with his kindly smile, and they likewise smiled with their eyes fixed on his. Those glances proclaimed everything, the closest affection and complete self-bestowal for ever.

“Come in, Pierre,” called Guillaume; “shake hands with these young men.”

The priest had remained near the door, overcome by a singular feeling of discomfort. When his nephews had vigorously shaken hands with him, he sat down near the window apart from them, as if he felt out of his element there.

“Well, youngsters,” said Guillaume, “where’s Mère-Grand, and where’s Marie?”

Their grandmother was upstairs in her room, they said; and Marie had taken it into her head to go marketing. This, by the way, was one of her delights. She asserted that she was the only one who knew how to buy new-laid eggs and butter of a nutty odour. Moreover, she sometimes brought some dainty or some flowers home, in her delight at proving herself to be so good a housewife.

“And so things are going on well?” resumed Guil-

laume. "You are all satisfied, your work is progressing, eh?"

He addressed brief questions to each of them, like one who, on his return home, at once reverts to his usual habits. Thomas, with his rough face beaming, explained in a couple of sentences that he was now sure of perfecting his little motor; François, who was still preparing for his examination, jestingly declared that he yet had to lodge a heap of learning in his brain; and then Antoine produced the block which he was finishing, and which depicted his little friend Lise, Jahan's sister, reading in her garden amidst the sunshine. It was like a florescence of that dear be-lated creature whose mind had been awakened by his affection.

However, the three brothers speedily went back to their places, reverting to their work with a natural impulse, for discipline had made them regard work as life itself. Then Guillaume, who had glanced at what each was doing, exclaimed: "Ah! youngsters, I schemed and prepared a lot of things myself while I was laid up. I even made a good many notes. We walked here from Neuilly, but my papers and the clothes which Mère-Grand sent me will come in a cab by-and-by. . . . Ah! how pleased I am to find everything in order here, and to be able to take up my task with you again! Ah! I shall polish off some work now, and no mistake!"

He had already gone to his own corner, the space reserved for him between the window and the forge. He there had a chemical furnace, several glass cases and shelves crowded with appliances, and a long table,

one end of which he used for writing purposes. And he once more took possession of that little world. After glancing around with delight at seeing everything in its place, he began to handle one object and another, eager to be at work like his sons.

All at once, however, Mère-Grand appeared, calm, grave and erect in her black gown, at the top of the little staircase which conducted to the bedrooms. "So it's you, Guillaume?" said she. "Will you come up for a moment?"

He immediately did so, understanding that she wished to speak to him alone and tranquillise him. It was a question of the great secret between them, that one thing of which her sons knew nothing, and which, after Salvat's crime, had brought him much anguish, through his fear that it might be divulged. When he reached Mère-Grand's room she at once took him to the hiding-place near her bed, and showed him the cartridges of the new explosive, and the plans of the terrible engine of warfare which he had invented. He found them all as he had left them. Before anyone could have reached them, she would have blown up the whole place at the risk of perishing herself in the explosion. With her wonted air of quiet heroism, she handed Guillaume the key which he had sent her by Pierre.

"You were not anxious, I hope?" she said.

He pressed her hands with a commingling of affection and respect. "My only anxiety," he replied, "was that the police might come here and treat you roughly. . . . You are the guardian of our secret, and it would be for you to finish my work should I disappear."

While Guillaume and Madame Leroi were thus engaged upstairs, Pierre, still seated near the window below, felt his discomfort increasing. The inmates of the house certainly regarded him with no other feeling than one of affectionate sympathy; and so how came it that he considered them hostile? The truth was that he asked himself what would become of him among those workers, who were upheld by a faith of their own, whereas he believed in nothing, and did not work. The sight of those young men, so gaily and zealously toiling, ended by quite irritating him; and the arrival of Marie brought his distress to a climax.

Joyous and full of life, she came in without seeing him, a basket on her arm. And she seemed to bring all the sunlight of the spring morning with her, so bright was the sparkle of her youth. The whole of her pink face, her delicate nose, her broad intelligent brow, her thick, kindly lips, beamed beneath the heavy coils of her black hair. And her brown eyes ever laughed with the joyousness which comes from health and strength.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "I have brought such a lot of things, youngsters. Just come and see them; I wouldn't unpack the basket in the kitchen."

It became absolutely necessary for the brothers to draw round the basket which she had laid upon the table. "First there's the butter!" said she; "just smell if it hasn't a nice scent of nuts! It's churned especially for me, you know. Then here are the eggs. They were laid only yesterday, I'll answer for it. And, in fact, that one there is this morning's. And

look at the cutlets! They're wonderful, aren't they? The butcher cuts them carefully when he sees me. And then here's a cream cheese, real cream, you know, it will be delicious! Ah! and here's the surprise, something dainty, some radishes, some pretty little pink radishes. Just fancy! radishes in March, what a luxury!"

She triumphed like the good little housewife she was, one who had followed a whole course of cookery and home duties at the Lycée Fénelon. The brothers, as merry as she herself, were obliged to compliment her.

All at once, however, she caught sight of Pierre. "What! you are there, Monsieur l'Abbé?" she exclaimed; "I beg your pardon, but I didn't see you. How is Guillaume? Have you brought us some news of him?"

"But father's come home," said Thomas; "he's upstairs with Mère-Grand."

Quite thunderstruck, she hastily placed her purchases in the basket. "Guillaume's come back, Guillaume's come back!" said she, "and you don't tell me of it, you let me unpack everything! Well, it's nice of me, I must say, to go on praising my butter and eggs when Guillaume's come back."

Guillaume, as it happened, was just coming down with Madame Leroi. Marie gaily hastened to him and offered him her cheeks, on which he planted two resounding kisses. Then she, resting her hands on his shoulders, gave him a long look, while saying in a somewhat tremulous voice: "I am pleased, very pleased to see you, Guillaume. I may confess it now,

I thought I had lost you, I was very anxious and very unhappy."

Although she was still smiling, tears had gathered in her eyes, and he, likewise moved, again kissed her, murmuring: "Dear Marie! How happy it makes me to find you as beautiful and as affectionate as ever."

Pierre, who was looking at them, deemed them cold. He had doubtless expected more tears, and a more passionate embrace on the part of an affianced pair, whom so grievous an accident had separated almost on the eve of their wedding. Moreover, his feelings were hurt by the disproportion of their respective ages. No doubt his brother still seemed to him very sturdy and young, and his feeling of repulsion must have come from that young woman whom, most decidedly, he did not like. Ever since her arrival he had experienced increasing discomfort, a keener and keener desire to go off and never return.

So acute became his suffering at feeling like a stranger in his brother's home, that he at last rose and sought to take his leave, under the pretext that he had some urgent matters to attend to in town.

"What! you won't stay to *déjeuner* with us!" exclaimed Guillaume in perfect stupefaction. "Why, it was agreed! You surely won't distress me like that! This house is your own, remember!"

Then, as with genuine affection they all protested and pressed him to stay, he was obliged to do so. However, he soon relapsed into silence and embarrassment, seated on the same chair as before, and listening moodily to those people who, although they

were his relatives, seemed to be far removed from him.

As it was barely eleven o'clock they resumed work, but every now and again there was some merry talk. On one of the servants coming for the provisions, Marie told the girl to call her as soon as it should be time to boil the eggs, for she prided herself on boiling them to a nicety, in such wise as to leave the whites like creamy milk. This gave an opportunity for a few jests from François, who occasionally teased her about all the fine things she had learnt at the Lycée Fénelon, where her father had placed her when she was twelve years old. However, she was not afraid of him, but gave him tit for tat by chaffing him about all the hours which he lost at the École Normale over a mass of pedagogic trash.

"Ah! you big children!" she exclaimed, while still working at her embroidery. "You are all very intelligent, and you all claim to have broad minds, and yet — confess it now — it worries you a little that a girl like me should have studied at college in the same way as yourselves. It's a sexual quarrel, a question of rivalry and competition, isn't it?"

They protested the contrary, declaring that they were in favour of girls receiving as complete an education as possible. She was well aware of this; however, she liked to tease them in return for the manner in which they themselves plagued her.

"But do you know," said she, "you are a great deal behind the times? I am well aware of the reproaches which are levelled at girls' colleges by so-called right-minded people. To begin, there is no religious ele-

ment whatever in the education one receives there, and this alarms many families which consider religious education to be absolutely necessary for girls, if only as a moral weapon of defence. Then, too, the education at our Lycées is being democratised — girls of all positions come to them. Thanks to the scholarships which are so liberally offered, the daughter of the lady who rents a first floor flat often finds the daughter of her door-keeper among her schoolfellows, and some think this objectionable. It is said also that the pupils free themselves too much from home influence, and that too much opportunity is left for personal initiative. As a matter of fact the extensiveness of the many courses of study, all the learning that is required of pupils at the examinations, certainly does tend to their emancipation, to the coming of the future woman and future society, which you young men are all longing for, are you not?"

"Of course we are!" exclaimed François; "we all agree on that point."

She waved her hand in a pretty way, and then quietly continued: "I'm jesting. My views are simple enough, as you well know, and I don't ask for nearly as much as you do. As for woman's claims and rights, well, the question is clear enough; woman is man's equal so far as nature allows it. And the only point is to agree and love one another. At the same time I'm well pleased to know what I do — oh! not from any spirit of pedantry but simply because I think it has all done me good, and given me some moral as well as physical health."

It delighted her to recall the days she had spent at

the Lycée Fénelon, which of the five State colleges for girls opened in Paris was the only one counting a large number of pupils. Most of these were the daughters of officials or professors, who purposed entering the teaching profession. In this case, they had to win their last diploma at the École Normale of Sèvres, after leaving the Lycée. Marie, for her part, though her studies had been brilliant, had felt no taste whatever for the calling of teacher. Moreover, when Guillaume had taken charge of her after her father's death, he had refused to let her run about giving lessons. To provide herself with a little money, for she would accept none as a gift, she worked at embroidery, an art in which she was most accomplished.

While she was talking to the young men Guillaume had listened to her without interfering. If he had fallen in love with her it was largely on account of her frankness and uprightness, the even balance of her nature, which gave her so forcible a charm. She knew all; but if she lacked the poetry of the shrinking, lamb-like girl who has been brought up in ignorance, she had gained absolute rectitude of heart and mind, exempt from all hypocrisy, all secret perversity such as is stimulated by what may seem mysterious in life. And whatever she might know, she had retained such child-like purity that in spite of her six-and-twenty summers all the blood in her veins would occasionally rush to her cheeks in fiery blushes, which drove her to despair.

"My dear Marie," Guillaume now exclaimed, "you know very well that the youngsters were simply jok-

ing. You are in the right, of course. . . . And your boiled eggs cannot be matched in the whole world."

He said this in so soft and affectionate a tone that the young woman flushed purple. Then, becoming conscious of it, she coloured yet more deeply, and as the three young men glanced at her maliciously she grew angry with herself. "Isn't it ridiculous, Monsieur l'Abbé," she said, turning towards Pierre, "for an old maid like myself to blush in that fashion? People might think that I had committed a crime. It's simply to make me blush, you know, that those children tease me. I do all I can to prevent it, but it's stronger than my will."

At this Mère-Grand raised her eyes from the shirt she was mending, and remarked: "Oh! it's natural enough, my dear. It is your heart rising to your cheeks in order that we may see it."

The *déjeuner* hour was now at hand; and they decided to lay the table in the work-shop, as was occasionally done when they had a guest. The simple, cordial meal proved very enjoyable in the bright sunlight. Marie's boiled eggs, which she herself brought from the kitchen covered with a napkin, were found delicious. Due honour was also done to the butter and the radishes. The only dessert that followed the cutlets was the cream cheese, but it was a cheese such as nobody else had ever partaken of. And, meantime, while they ate and chatted all Paris lay below them, stretching away to the horizon with its mighty rumbling.

Pierre had made an effort to become cheerful, but

he soon relapsed into silence. Guillaume, however, was very talkative. Having noticed the three bicycles in the garden, he inquired of Marie how far she had gone that morning. She answered that François and Antoine had accompanied her in the direction of Orgemont. The worry of their excursions was that each time they returned to Montmartre they had to push their machines up the height. From the general point of view, however, the young woman was delighted with bicycling, which had many virtues, said she. Then, seeing Pierre glance at her in amazement, she promised that she would some day explain her opinions on the subject to him. After this bicycling became the one topic of conversation until the end of the meal. Thomas gave an account of the latest improvements introduced into Grandidier's machines; and the others talked of the excursions they had made or meant to make, with all the exuberant delight of school children eager for the open air.

In the midst of the chatter, Mère-Grand, who presided at table with the serene dignity of a queen-mother, leant towards Guillaume, who sat next to her, and spoke to him in an undertone. Pierre understood that she was referring to his marriage, which was to have taken place in April, but must now necessarily be deferred. This sensible marriage, which seemed likely to ensure the happiness of the entire household, was largely the work of Mère-Grand and the three young men, for Guillaume would never have yielded to his heart if she whom he proposed to make his wife had not already been a well-loved member of the family. At the present time the last

week in June seemed, for all sorts of reasons, to be a favourable date for the wedding.

Marie, who heard the suggestion, turned gaily towards Mère-Grand.

"The end of June will suit very well, will it not, my dear?" said the latter.

Pierre expected to see a deep flush rise to the young woman's cheeks, but she remained very calm. She felt deep affection, blended with the most tender gratitude, for Guillaume, and was convinced that in marrying him she would be acting wisely and well both for herself and the others.

"Certainly, the end of June," she repeated, "that will suit very well indeed."

Then the sons, who likewise had heard the proposal, nodded their heads by way of assenting also.

When they rose from table Pierre was absolutely determined to go off. The cordial and simple meal, the sight of that family, which had been rendered so happy by Guillaume's return, and of that young woman who smiled so placidly at life, had brought him keen suffering, though why he could not tell. However, it all irritated him beyond endurance; and he therefore again pretended that he had a number of things to see to in Paris. He shook hands in turn with the young men, Mère-Grand and Marie; both of the women evincing great friendliness but also some surprise at his haste to leave the house. Guillaume, who seemed saddened and anxious, sought to detain him, and failing in this endeavour followed him into the little garden, where he stopped him in order to have an explanation.

"Come," said he, "what is the matter with you, Pierre? Why are you running off like this?"

"Oh! there's nothing the matter I assure you; but I have to attend to a few urgent affairs."

"Oh, Pierre, pray put all pretence aside. Nobody here has displeased you or hurt your feelings, I hope. They also will soon love you as I do."

"I have no doubt of it, and I complain of nobody excepting perhaps myself."

Guillaume's sorrow was increasing. "Ah! brother, little brother," he resumed, "you distress me, for I can detect that you are hiding something from me. Remember that new ties have linked us together and that we love one another as in the old days when you were in your cradle and I used to come to play with you. I know you well, remember. I know all your tortures, since you have confessed them to me; and I won't have you suffer, I want to cure you, I do!"

Pierre's heart was full, and as he heard those words he could not restrain his tears. "Oh! you must leave me to my sufferings," he responded. "They are incurable. You can do nothing for me, I am beyond the pale of nature, I am a monster."

"What do you say! Can you not return within nature's pale even if you *have* gone beyond it? One thing that I will not allow is that you should go and shut yourself up in that solitary little house of yours, where you madden yourself by brooding over the fall of your faith. Come and spend your time with us, so that we may again give you some taste for life."

Ah! the empty little house which awaited him! Pierre shivered at the thought of it, at the idea that

he would now find himself all alone there, bereft of the brother with whom he had lately spent so many happy days. Into what solitude and torment must he not now relapse after that companionship to which he had become accustomed? However, the very thought of the latter increased his grief, and confession suddenly gushed from his lips: "To spend my time here, live with you, oh! no, that is an impossibility. Why do you compel me to speak out, and tell you things that I am ashamed of and do not even understand. Ever since this morning you must have seen that I have been suffering here. No doubt it is because you and your people work, whereas I do nothing, because you love one another and believe in your efforts, whereas I no longer know how to love or believe. I feel out of my element. I'm embarrassed here, and I embarrass you. In fact you all irritate me, and I might end by hating you. There remains nothing healthy in me, all natural feelings have been spoilt and destroyed, and only envy and hatred could sprout up from such ruins. So let me go back to my accursed hole, where death will some day come for me. Farewell, brother!"

But Guillaume, full of affection and compassion, caught hold of his arms and detained him. "You shall not go, I will not allow you to go, without a positive promise that you will come back. I don't wish to lose you again, especially now that I know all you are worth and how dreadfully you suffer. I will save you, if need be, in spite of yourself. I will cure you of your torturing doubts, oh! without catechising you, without imposing any particular faith on you,

but simply by allowing life to do its work, for life alone can give you back health and hope. So I beg you, brother, in the name of our affection, come back here, come as often as you can to spend a day with us. You will then see that when folks have allotted themselves a task and work together in unison, they escape excessive unhappiness. A task of any kind — yes, that is what is wanted, together with some great passion and frank acceptance of life, so that it may be lived as it should be and loved.”

“But what would be the use of my living here?” Pierre muttered bitterly. “I’ve no task left me, and I no longer know how to love.”

“Well, I will give you a task, and as for love, that will soon be awakened by the breath of life. Come, brother, consent, consent!”

Then, seeing that Pierre still remained gloomy and sorrowful, and persisted in his determination to go away and bury himself, Guillaume added, “Ah! I don’t say that the things of this world are such as one might wish them to be. I don’t say that only joy and truth and justice exist. For instance, the affair of that unhappy fellow Salvat fills me with anger and revolt. Guilty he is, of course, and yet how many excuses he had, and how I shall pity him if the crimes of all of us are laid at his door, if the various political gangs bandy him from one to another, and use him as a weapon in their sordid fight for power. The thought of it all so exasperates me that at times I am as unreasonable as yourself. But now, brother, just to please me, promise that you will come and spend the day after to-morrow with us.”

Then, as Pierre still kept silent, Guillaume went on: "I will have it so. It would grieve me too much to think that you were suffering from martyrdom in your solitary nook. I want to cure and save you."

Tears again rose to Pierre's eyes, and in a tone of infinite distress he answered: "Don't compel me to promise. . . . All I can say is that I will try to conquer myself."

The week he then spent in his little, dark, empty home proved a terrible one. Shutting himself up he brooded over his despair at having lost the companionship of that elder brother whom he once more loved with his whole soul. He had never before been so keenly conscious of his solitude; and he was a score of times on the point of hastening to Montmartre, for he vaguely felt that affection, truth and life were there. But on each occasion he was held back by a return of the discomfort which he had already experienced, discomfort compounded of shame and fear. Priest that he was, cut off from love and the avocations of other men, he would surely find nothing but hurt and suffering among creatures who were all nature, freedom and health. While he pondered thus, however, there rose before him the shades of his father and mother, those sad spirits that seemed to wander through the deserted rooms lamenting and entreating him to reconcile them in himself, as soon as he should find peace. What was he to do, — deny their prayer, and remain weeping with them, or go yonder in search of the cure which might at last lull them to sleep and bring them happiness in death by

the force of his own happiness in life? At last a morning came when it seemed to him that his father enjoined him with a smile to betake himself yonder, while his mother consented with a glance of her big soft eyes, in which her sorrow at having made so bad a priest of him yielded to her desire to restore him to the life of our common humanity.

Pierre did not argue with himself that day: he took a cab and gave Guillaume's address to the driver for fear lest he should be overcome on the way and wish to turn back. And when he again found himself, as in a dream, in the large work-shop, where Guillaume and the young men welcomed him in a delicately affectionate way, he witnessed an unexpected scene which both impressed and relieved him.

Marie, who had scarcely nodded to him as he entered, sat there with a pale and frowning face. And Mère-Grand, who was also grave, said, after glancing at her: "You must excuse her, Monsieur l'Abbé; but she isn't reasonable. She is in a temper with all five of us."

Guillaume began to laugh. "Ah! she's so stubborn!" he exclaimed. "You can have no idea, Pierre, of what goes on in that little head of hers when anybody says or does anything contrary to her ideas of justice. Such absolute and lofty ideas they are, that they can descend to no compromise. For instance, we were talking of that recent affair of a father who was found guilty on his son's evidence; and she maintained that the son had only done what was right in giving evidence against his father, and that one ought invariably to tell the truth, no matter what might

happen. What a terrible public prosecutor she would make, eh?"

Thereupon Marie, exasperated by Pierre's smile, which seemingly indicated that he also thought her in the wrong, flew into quite a passion: "You are cruel, Guillaume!" she cried; "I won't be laughed at like this."

"But you are losing your senses, my dear," exclaimed François, while Thomas and Antoine again grew merry. "We were only urging a question of humanity, father and I, for we respect and love justice as much as you do."

"There's no question of humanity, but simply one of justice. What is just and right *is* just and right, and you cannot alter it."

Then, as Guillaume made a further attempt to state his views and win her over to them, she rose trembling, in such a passion that she could scarcely stammer: "No, no, you are all too cruel, you only want to grieve me. I prefer to go up into my own room."

At this Mère-Grand vainly sought to restrain her. "My child, my child!" said she, "reflect a moment; this is very wrong, you will deeply regret it."

"No, no; you are not just, and I suffer too much."

Then she wildly rushed upstairs to her room overhead.

Consternation followed. Scenes of a similar character had occasionally occurred before, but there had never been so serious a one. Guillaume immediately admitted that he had done wrong in laughing at her, for she could not bear irony. Then he told Pierre that in her childhood and youth she had been subject

to terrible attacks of passion whenever she witnessed or heard of any act of injustice. As she herself explained, these attacks would come upon her with irresistible force, transporting her to such a point that she would sometimes fall upon the floor and rave. Even nowadays she proved quarrelsome and obstinate whenever certain subjects were touched upon. And she afterwards blushed for it all, fully conscious that others must think her unbearable.

Indeed, a quarter of an hour later, she came downstairs again of her own accord, and bravely acknowledged her fault. "Wasn't it ridiculous of me?" she said. "To think I accuse others of being unkind when I behave like that! Monsieur l'Abbé must have a very bad opinion of me." Then, after kissing Mère-Grand, she added: "You'll forgive me, won't you? Oh! François may laugh now, and so may Thomas and Antoine. They are quite right, our differences are merely laughing matters."

"My poor Marie," replied Guillaume, in a tone of deep affection. "You see what it is to surrender oneself to the absolute. If you are so healthy and reasonable it's because you regard almost everything from the relative point of view, and only ask life for such gifts as it can bestow. But when your absolute ideas of justice come upon you, you lose both equilibrium and reason. At the same time, I must say that we are all liable to err in much the same manner."

Marie, who was still very flushed, thereupon answered in a jesting way: "Well, it at least proves that I'm not perfect."

"Oh, certainly! And so much the better," said Guillaume, "for it makes me love you the more."

This was a sentiment which Pierre himself would willingly have re-echoed. The scene had deeply stirred him. Had not his own frightful torments originated with his desire for the absolute both in things and beings? He had sought faith in its entirety, and despair had thrown him into complete negation. Again, was there not some evil desire for the absolute and some affectation of pride and voluntary blindness in the haughty bearing which he had retained amidst the downfall of his belief, the saintly reputation which he had accepted when he possessed no faith at all? On hearing his brother praise Marie, because she only asked life for such things as it could give, it had seemed to him that this was advice for himself. It was as if a refreshing breath of nature had passed before his face. At the same time his feelings in this respect were still vague, and the only well-defined pleasure that he experienced came from the young woman's fit of anger, that error of hers which brought her nearer to him, by lowering her in some degree from her pedestal of serene perfection. It was, perhaps, that seeming perfection which had made him suffer; however, he was as yet unable to analyse his feelings. That day, for the first time, he chatted with her for a little while, and when he went off he thought her very good-hearted and very human.

Two days later he again came to spend the afternoon in the large sunlit work-shop overlooking Paris. Ever since he had become conscious of the idle life he was leading, he had felt very bored when he was

alone, and only found relief among that gay, hard-working family. His brother scolded him for not having come to *déjeuner*, and he promised to do so on the morrow. By the time a week had elapsed, none of the discomfort and covert hostility which had prevailed between him and Marie remained: they met and chatted on a footing of good fellowship. Although he was a priest, she was in no wise embarrassed by his presence. With her quiet atheism, indeed, she had never imagined that a priest could be different from other men. Thus her sisterly cordiality both astonished and delighted Pierre. It was as if he wore the same garments and held the same ideas as his big nephews, as if there were nothing whatever to distinguish him from other men. He was still more surprised, however, by Marie's silence on all religious questions. She seemed to live on quietly and happily, without a thought of what might be beyond life, that terrifying realm of mystery, which to him had brought such agony of mind.

Now that he came every two or three days to Montmartre she noticed that he was suffering. What could be the matter with him, she wondered. When she questioned him in a friendly manner and only elicited evasive replies, she guessed that he was ashamed of his sufferings, and that they were aggravated, rendered well-nigh incurable, by the very secrecy in which he buried them. Thereupon womanly compassion awoke within her, and she felt increasing affection for that tall, pale fellow with feverish eyes, who was consumed by grievous torments which he would confess to none. No doubt

she questioned Guillaume respecting her brother's sadness, and he must have confided some of the truth to her in order that she might help him to extricate Pierre from his sufferings, and give him back some taste for life. The poor fellow always seemed so happy when she treated him like a friend, a brother!

At last, one evening, on seeing his eyes full of tears as he gazed upon the dismal twilight falling over Paris, she herself pressed him to confide his trouble to her. And thereupon he suddenly spoke out, confessing all his torture and the horrible void which the loss of faith had left within him. Ah! to be unable to believe, to be unable to love, to be nothing but ashes, to know of nothing certain by which he might replace the faith that had fled from him! She listened in stupefaction. Why, he must be mad! And she plainly told him so, such was her astonishment and revolt at hearing such a desperate cry of wretchedness. To despair, indeed, and believe in nothing and love nothing, simply because a religious hypothesis had crumbled! And this, too, when the whole, vast world was spread before one, life with the duty of living it, creatures and things to be loved and succoured, without counting the universal labour, the task which one and all came to accomplish! Assuredly he must be mad, mad with the gloomiest madness; still she vowed she would cure him.

From that time forward she felt the most compassionate affection for this extraordinary young man, who had first embarrassed and afterwards astonished her. She showed herself very gentle and gay with him; she looked after him with the greatest skill and

delicacy of heart and mind. There had been certain similar features in their childhood; each had been reared in the strictest religious views by a pious mother. But afterwards how different had been their fates! Whilst he was struggling with his doubts, bound by his priestly vows, she had grown up at the Lycée Fénelon, where her father had placed her as soon as her mother died; and there, far removed from all practice of religion, she had gradually reached total forgetfulness of her early religious views. It was a constant source of surprise for him to find that she had thus escaped all distress of mind at the thought of what might come after death, whereas that same thought had so deeply tortured him. When they chatted together and he expressed his astonishment at it, she frankly laughed, saying that she had never felt any fear of hell, for she was certain that no hell existed. And she added that she lived in all quietude, without hope of going to any heaven, her one thought being to comply in a reasonable way with the requirements and necessities of earthly life. It was, perhaps, in some measure a matter of temperament with her; but it was also a matter of education. Yet, whatever that education had been, whatever knowledge she had acquired, she had remained very womanly and very loving. There was nothing stern or masculine about her.

"Ah, my friend," she said one day to Pierre, "if you only knew how easy it is for me to remain happy so long as I see those I love free from any excessive suffering. For my own part I can always adapt myself to life. I work and content myself no matter

what may happen. Sorrow has only come to me from others, for I can't help wishing that everybody should be fairly happy, and there are some who won't. . . . I was for a long time very poor, but I remained gay. I wish for nothing, except for things that can't be purchased. Still, want is the great abomination which distresses me. I can understand that you should have felt everything crumbling when charity appeared to you so insufficient a remedy as to be contemptible. Yet it does bring relief; and, moreover, it is so sweet to be able to give. Some day, too, by dint of reason and toil, by the good and efficient working of life itself, the reign of justice will surely come. But now it's I that am preaching! Oh! I have little taste for it! It would be ridiculous for me to try to heal you with big phrases. All the same, I should like to cure you of your gloomy sufferings. To do so, all that I ask of you is to spend as much time as you can with us. You know that this is Guillaume's greatest desire. We will all love you so well, you will see us all so affectionately united, and so gay over our common work, that you will come back to truth by joining us in the school of our good mother nature. You must live and work, and love and hope."

Pierre smiled as he listened. He now came to Montmartre nearly every day. She was so nice and affectionate when she preached to him in that way with a pretty assumption of wisdom. As she had said too, life was so delightful in that big workroom; it was so pleasant to be all together, and to labour in common at the same work of health and truth.

Ashamed as Pierre was of doing nothing, anxious as he was to occupy his mind and fingers, he had first taken an interest in Antoine's engraving, asking why he should not try something of the kind himself. However, he felt that he lacked the necessary gift for art. Then, too, he recoiled from François' purely intellectual labour, for he himself had scarcely emerged from the harrowing study of conflicting texts. Thus he was more inclined for manual toil like that of Thomas. In mechanics he found precision and clearness such as might help to quench his thirst for certainty. So he placed himself at the young man's orders, pulled his bellows and held pieces of mechanism for him. He also sometimes served as assistant to Guillaume, tying a large blue apron over his cassock in order to help in the experiments. From that time he formed part of the work-shop, which simply counted a worker the more.

One afternoon early in April, when they were all busily engaged there, Marie, who sat embroidering at the table in front of Mère-Grand, raised her eyes to the window and suddenly burst into a cry of admiration: "Oh! look at Paris under that rain of sunlight!"

Pierre drew near; the play of light was much the same as that which he had witnessed at his first visit. The sun, sinking behind some slight purple clouds, was throwing down a hail of rays and sparks which on all sides rebounded and leapt over the endless stretch of roofs. It might have been thought that some great sower, hidden amidst the glory of the planet, was scattering handfuls of golden grain from one horizon to the other.

Pierre, at sight of it, put his fancy into words: "It is the sun sowing Paris with grain for a future harvest," said he. "See how the expanse looks like ploughed land; the brownish houses are like soil turned up, and the streets are deep and straight like furrows."

"Yes, yes, that's true," exclaimed Marie gaily. "The sun is sowing Paris with grain. See how it casts the seed of light and health right away to the distant suburbs! And yet, how singular! The rich districts on the west seem steeped in a ruddy mist, whilst the good seed falls in golden dust over the left bank and the populous districts eastward. It is there, is it not, that the crop will spring up?"

They had all drawn near, and were smiling at the symbol. As Marie had said, it seemed indeed that while the sun slowly sank behind the lacework of clouds, the sower of eternal life scattered his flaming seed with a rhythmical swing of the arm, ever selecting the districts of toil and effort. One dazzling handful of grain fell over yonder on the district of the schools; and then yet another rained down to fertilise the district of the factories and work-shops.

"Ah! well," said Guillaume gaily. "May the crop soon sprout from the good ground of our great Paris, which has been turned up by so many revolutions, and enriched by the blood of so many workers! It is the only ground in the world where Ideas can germinate and bloom. Yes, yes, Pierre is quite right, it is the sun sowing Paris with the seed of the future world, which can sprout only up here!"

Then Thomas, François and Antoine, who stood

behind their father in a row, nodded as if to say that this was also their own conviction; whilst Mère-Grand gazed afar with dreamy eyes as though she could already behold the splendid future.

"Ah! but it is only a dream; centuries must elapse. We shall never see it!" murmured Pierre with a quiver.

"But others will!" cried Marie. "And does not that suffice?"

Those lofty words stirred Pierre to the depths of his being. And all at once there came to him the memory of another Marie¹—the adorable Marie of his youth, that Marie de Guersaint who had been cured at Lourdes, and the loss of whom had left such a void in his heart. Was that new Marie who stood there smiling at him, so tranquil and so charming in her strength, destined to heal that old-time wound? He felt that he was beginning to live again since she had become his friend.

Meantime, there before them, the glorious sun, with the sweep of its rays, was scattering living golden dust over Paris, still and ever sowing the great future harvest of justice and of truth.

¹ The heroine of M. Zola's "Lourdes."

II

TOWARDS LIFE

ONE evening, at the close of a good day's work, Pierre, who was helping Thomas, suddenly caught his foot in the skirt of his cassock and narrowly escaped falling. At this, Marie, after raising a faint cry of anxiety, exclaimed: "Why don't you take it off?"

There was no malice in her inquiry. She simply looked upon the priestly robe as something too heavy and cumbersome, particularly when one had certain work to perform. Nevertheless, her words deeply impressed Pierre, and he could not forget them. When he was at home in the evening and repeated them to himself they gradually threw him into feverish agitation. Why, indeed, had he not divested himself of that cassock, which weighed so heavily and painfully on his shoulders? Then a frightful struggle began within him, and he spent a terrible, sleepless night, again a prey to all his former torments.

At first sight it seemed a very simple matter that he should cast his priestly gown aside, for had he not ceased to discharge any priestly office? He had not said mass for some time past, and this surely meant renunciation of the priesthood. Nevertheless, so long as he retained his gown it was possible that he might

some day say mass again, whereas if he cast it aside he would, as it were, strip himself, quit the priesthood entirely, without possibility of return. It was a terrible step to take, one that would prove irrevocable; and thus he paced his room for hours, in great anguish of mind.

He had formerly indulged in a superb dream. Whilst believing nothing himself he had resolved to watch, in all loyalty, over the belief of others. He would not so lower himself as to forswear his vows, he would be no base renegade, but however great the torments of the void he felt within him he would remain the minister of man's illusions respecting the Divinity. And it was by reason of his conduct in this respect that he had ended by being venerated as a saint—he who denied everything, who had become a mere empty sepulchre. For a long time his falsehood had never disturbed him, but it now brought him acute suffering. It seemed to him that he would be acting in the vilest manner if he delayed placing his life in accord with his opinions. The thought of it all quite rent his heart.

The question was a very clear one. By what right did he remain the minister of a religion in which he no longer believed? Did not elementary honesty require that he should quit a Church in which he denied the presence of the Divinity? He regarded the dogmas of that Church as puerile errors, and yet he persisted in teaching them as if they were eternal truths. Base work it was, that alarmed his conscience. He vainly sought the feverish glow of charity and martyrdom which had led him to offer himself as a

sacrifice, willing to suffer all the torture of doubt and to find his own life lost and ravaged, provided that he might yet afford the relief of hope to the lowly. Truth and nature, no doubt, had already regained too much ascendancy over him for those feelings to return. The thought of such a lying apostolate now wounded him; he no longer had the hypocritical courage to call the Divinity down upon the believers kneeling before him, when he was convinced that the Divinity would not descend. Thus all the past was swept away; there remained nothing of the sublime pastoral part he would once have liked to play, that supreme gift of himself which lay in stubborn adherence to the rules of the Church, and such devotion to faith as to endure in silence the torture of having lost it.

What must Marie think of his prolonged falsehood, he wondered, and thereupon he seemed to hear her words again: "Why not take your cassock off?" His conscience bled as if those words were a stab. What contempt must she not feel for him, she who was so upright, so high-minded? Every scattered blame, every covert criticism directed against his conduct, seemed to find embodiment in her. It now sufficed that she should condemn him, and he at once felt guilty. At the same time she had never voiced her disapproval to him, in all probability because she did not think she had any right to intervene in a struggle of conscience. The superb calmness and healthiness which she displayed still astonished him. He himself was ever haunted and tortured by thoughts of the unknown, of what the morrow of death might have in store for one; but although he had studied and

watched her for days together, he had never seen her give a sign of doubt or distress. This exemption from such sufferings as his own was due, said she, to the fact that she gave all her gaiety, all her energy, all her sense of duty, to the task of living, in such wise that life itself proved a sufficiency, and no time was left for mere fancies to terrify and stultify her. Well, then, since she with her air of quiet strength had asked him why he did not take off his cassock, he would take it off—yes, he would divest himself of that robe which seemed to burn and weigh him down.

He fancied himself calmed by this decision, and towards morning threw himself upon his bed; but all at once a stifling sensation, a renewal of his abominable anguish, brought him to his feet again. No, no, he could not divest himself of that gown which clung so tightly to his flesh. His skin would come away with his cloth, his whole being would be lacerated! Is not the mark of priesthood an indelible one, does it not brand the priest for ever, and differentiate him from the flock? Even should he tear off his gown with his skin, he would remain a priest, an object of scandal and shame, awkward and impotent, shut off from the life of other men. And so why tear it off, since he would still and ever remain in prison, and a fruitful life of work in the broad sunlight was no longer within his reach? He, indeed, fancied himself irremediably stricken with impotence. Thus he was unable to come to any decision, and when he returned to Montmartre two days later he had again relapsed into a state of torment.

Feverishness, moreover, had come upon the happy

home. Guillaume was becoming more and more annoyed about Salvat's affair, not a day elapsing without the newspapers fanning his irritation. He had at first been deeply touched by the dignified and reticent bearing of Salvat, who had declared that he had no accomplices whatever. Of course the inquiry into the crime was what is called a secret one; but magistrate Amadiou, to whom it had been entrusted, conducted it in a very noisy way. The newspapers, which he in some degree took into his confidence, were full of articles and paragraphs about him and his interviews with the prisoner. Thanks to Salvat's quiet admissions, Amadiou had been able to retrace the history of the crime hour by hour, his only remaining doubts having reference to the nature of the powder which had been employed, and the making of the bomb itself. It might after all be true that Salvat had loaded the bomb at a friend's, as he indeed asserted was the case; but he must be lying when he added that the only explosive used was dynamite, derived from some stolen cartridges, for all the experts now declared that dynamite would never have produced such effects as those which had been witnessed. This, then, was the mysterious point which protracted the investigations. And day by day the newspapers profited by it to circulate the wildest stories under sensational headings, which were specially devised for the purpose of sending up their sales.

It was all the nonsense contained in these stories that fanned Guillaume's irritation. In spite of his contempt for Sagnier he could not keep from buying the "*Voix du Peuple*." Quivering with indignation,

growing more and more exasperated, he was somehow attracted by the mire which he found in that scurrilous journal. Moreover, the other newspapers, including even the "Globe," which was usually so dignified, published all sorts of statements for which no proof could be supplied, and drew from them remarks and conclusions which, though couched in milder language than Sagnier's, were none the less abominably unjust. It seemed indeed as if the whole press had set itself the task of covering Salvat with mud, so as to be able to vilify Anarchism generally. According to the journalists the prisoner's life had simply been one long abomination. He had already earned his living by thievery in his childhood at the time when he had roamed the streets, an unhappy, forsaken vagrant; and later on he had proved a bad soldier and a bad worker. He had been punished for insubordination whilst he was in the army, and he had been dismissed from a dozen work-shops because he incessantly disturbed them by his Anarchical propaganda. Later still, he had fled his country and led a suspicious life of adventure in America, where, it was alleged, he must have committed all sorts of unknown crimes. Moreover there was his horrible immorality, his connection with his sister-in-law, that Madame Théodore who had taken charge of his forsaken child in his absence, and with whom he had cohabited since his return to France. In this wise Salvat's failings and transgressions were pitilessly denounced and magnified without any mention of the causes which had induced them, or of the excuses which lay in the unhappy man's degrading environ-

ment. And so Guillaume's feelings of humanity and justice revolted, for he knew the real Salvat, — a man of tender heart and dreamy mind, so liable to be impassioned by fancies, — a man cast into life when a child without weapon of defence, ever trodden down or thrust aside, then gradually exasperated by the perpetual onslaughts of want, and at last dreaming of reviving the golden age by destroying the old, corrupt world.

Unfortunately for Salvat, everything had gone against him since he had been shut up in strict confinement, at the mercy of the ambitious and worldly Amadien. Guillaume had learnt from his son, Thomas, that the prisoner could count on no support whatever among his former mates at the Grandidier works. These works were becoming prosperous once more, thanks to their steady output of bicycles; and it was said that Grandidier was only waiting for Thomas to perfect his little motor, in order to start the manufacture of motor-cars on a large scale. However, the success which he was now for the first time achieving, and which scarcely repaid him for all his years of toil and battle, had in certain respects rendered him prudent and even severe. He did not wish any suspicion to be cast upon his business through the unpleasant affair of his former workman Salvat, and so he had dismissed such of his workmen as held Anarchist views. If he had kept the two Toussaints, one of whom was the prisoner's brother-in-law, while the other was suspected of sympathy with him, this was because they had belonged to the works for a score of years, and he did not like to cast them adrift. More-

over, Toussaint, the father, had declared that if he were called as a witness for the defence, he should simply give such particulars of Salvat's career as related to the prisoner's marriage with his sister.

One evening when Thomas came home from the works, to which he returned every now and then in order to try his little motor, he related that he had that day seen Madame Grandidier, the poor young woman who had become insane through an attack of puerperal fever following upon the death of a child. Although most frightful attacks of madness occasionally came over her, and although life beside her was extremely painful, even during the intervals when she remained downcast and gentle as a child, her husband had never been willing to send her to an asylum. He kept her with him in a pavilion near the works, and as a rule the shutters of the windows overlooking the yard remained closed. Thus Thomas had been greatly surprised to see one of these windows open, and the young woman appear at it amidst the bright sunshine of that early spring. True, she only remained there for a moment, vision-like, fair and pretty, with smiling face; for a servant who suddenly drew near closed the window, and the pavilion then again sank into lifeless silence. At the same time it was reported among the men employed at the works that the poor creature had not experienced an attack for well-nigh a month past, and that this was the reason why the "governor" looked so strong and pleased, and worked so vigorously to help on the increasing prosperity of his business.

"He isn't a bad fellow," added Thomas, "but with

the terrible competition that he has to encounter, he is bent on keeping his men under control. Nowadays, says he, when so many capitalists and wage earners seem bent on exterminating one another, the latter — if they don't want to starve — ought to be well pleased when capital falls into the hands of an active, fair-minded man. . . . If he shows no pity for Salvat, it is because he really believes in the necessity of an example."

That same day Thomas, after leaving the works and while threading his way through the toilsome hive-like Marcadet district, had overtaken Madame Théodore and little Céline, who were wandering on in great distress. It appeared that they had just called upon Toussaint, who had been unable to lend them even such a trifle as ten sous. Since Salvat's arrest, the woman and the child had been forsaken and suspected by one and all. Driven forth from their wretched lodging, they were without food and wandered hither and thither dependent on chance alms. Never had greater want and misery fallen on defenceless creatures.

"I told them to come up here, father," said Thomas, "for I thought that one might pay their landlord a month's rent, so that they might go home again. . . . Ah! there's somebody coming now — it's they, no doubt."

Guillaume had felt angry with himself whilst listening to his son, for he had not thought of the poor creatures. It was the old story: the man disappears, and the woman and the child find themselves in the streets, starving. Whenever Justice strikes a man

her blow travels beyond him, fells innocent beings and kills them.

Madame Théodore came in, humble and timid, scared like a luckless creature whom life never wearies of persecuting. She was becoming almost blind, and little Céline had to lead her. The girl's fair, thin face wore its wonted expression of shrewd intelligence, and even now, however woful her rags, it was occasionally brightened by a childish smile.

Pierre and Marie, who were both there, felt extremely touched. Near them was Madame Mathis, young Victor's mother, who had come to help Mère-Grand with the mending of some house-linen. She went out by the day in this fashion among a few families, and was thus enabled to give her son an occasional franc or two. Guillaume alone questioned Madame Théodore.

"Ah! monsieur," she stammered, "who could ever have thought Salvat capable of such a thing, he who's so good and so humane? Still it's true, since he himself has admitted it to the magistrate. . . . For my part I told everybody that he was in Belgium. I wasn't quite sure of it, still I'm glad that he didn't come back to see us; for if he had been arrested at our place I should have lost my senses. . . . Well, now that they have him, they'll sentence him to death, that's certain."

At this Céline, who had been looking around her with an air of interest, piteously exclaimed: "Oh! no, oh! no, mamma, they won't hurt him!"

Big tears appeared in the child's eyes as she raised

this cry. Guillaume kissed her, and then went on questioning Madame Théodore.

"Well, monsieur," she answered, "the child's not old or big enough to work as yet, and my eyes are done for, people won't even take me as a charwoman. And so it's simple enough, we starve. . . . Oh! of course I'm not without relations; I have a sister who married very well. Her husband is a clerk, Monsieur Chrétiennot, perhaps you know him. Unfortunately he's rather proud, and as I don't want any scenes between him and my sister, I no longer go to see her. Besides, she's in despair just now, for she's expecting another baby, which is a terrible blow for a small household, when one already has two girls. . . . That's why the only person I can apply to is my brother Toussaint. His wife isn't a bad sort by any means, but she's no longer the same since she's been living in fear of her husband having another attack. The first one carried off all her savings, and what would become of her if Toussaint should remain on her hands, paralysed? Besides, she's threatened with another burden, for, as you may know, her son Charles got keeping company with a servant at a wine shop, who of course ran away after she had a baby, which she left him to see to. So one can understand that the Toussaints themselves are hard put. I don't complain of them. They've already lent me a little money, and of course they can't go on lending for ever."

She continued talking in this spiritless, resigned way, complaining only on account of Céline; for, said she, it was enough to make one's heart break to see such an intelligent child obliged to tramp the streets

after getting on so well at the Communal School. She could feel too that everybody now kept aloof from them on account of Salvat. The Toussaints didn't want to be compromised in any such business. There was only Charles, who had said that he could well understand a man losing his head and trying to blow up the *bourgeois*, because they really treated the workers in a blackguard way.

"For my part, monsieur," added Madame Théodore, "I say nothing, for I'm only a woman. All the same, though, if you'd like to know what I think, well, I think that it would have been better if Salvat hadn't done what he did, for we two, the girl and I, are the real ones to suffer from it. Ah! I can't get the idea into my head, that the little one should be the daughter of a man condemned to death."

Once more Céline interrupted her, flinging her arms around her neck: "Oh! mamma, oh! mamma, don't say that, I beg you! It can't be true, it grieves me too much!"

At this Pierre and Marie exchanged compassionate glances, while Mère-Grand rose from her chair, in order to go upstairs and search her wardrobes for some articles of clothing which might be of use to the two poor creatures. Guillaume, who, for his part, had been moved to tears, and felt full of revolt against the social system which rendered such distress possible, slipped some alms into the child's little hand, and promised Madame Théodore that he would see her landlord so as to get her back her room.

"Ah! Monsieur Froment!" replied the unfortunate woman. "Salvat was quite right when he said you

were a real good man! And as you employed him here for a few days you know too that he isn't a wicked one. . . . Now that he's been put in prison everybody calls him a brigand, and it breaks my heart to hear them." Then, turning towards Madame Mathis, who had continued sewing in discreet silence, like a respectable woman whom none of these things could concern, she went on: "I know you, madame, but I'm better acquainted with your son, Monsieur Victor, who has often come to chat at our place. Oh! you needn't be afraid, I shan't say it, I shall never compromise anybody; but if Monsieur Victor were free to speak, he'd be the man to explain Salvat's ideas properly."

Madame Mathis looked at her in stupefaction. Ignorant as she was of her son's real life and views, she experienced a vague dread at the idea of any connection between him and Salvat's family. Moreover, she refused to believe it possible. "Oh! you must be mistaken," she said. "Victor told me that he now seldom came to Montmartre, as he was always going about in search of work."

By the anxious quiver of the widow's voice, Madame Théodore understood that she ought not to have mixed her up in her troubles; and so in all humility she at once beat a retreat: "I beg your pardon, madame, I didn't think I should hurt your feelings. Perhaps, too, I'm mistaken, as you say."

Madame Mathis had again turned to her sewing as to the solitude in which she lived, that nook of decent misery where she dwelt without companionship and almost unknown, with scarcely sufficient bread to eat.

Ah! that dear son of hers, whom she loved so well; however much he might neglect her, she had placed her only remaining hope in him: he was her last dream, and would some day lavish all kinds of happiness upon her!

At that moment Mère-Grand came downstairs again, laden with a bundle of linen and woollen clothing, and Madame Théodore and little Céline withdrew while pouring forth their thanks. For a long time after they had gone Guillaume, unable to resume work, continued walking to and fro in silence, with a frown upon his face.

When Pierre, still hesitating and still tortured by conflicting feelings, returned to Montmartre on the following day he witnessed with much surprise a visit of a very different kind. There was a sudden gust of wind, a whirl of skirts and a ring of laughter as little Princess Rosemonde swept in, followed by young Hyacinthe Duvillard, who, on his side, retained a very frigid bearing.

"It's I, my dear master," exclaimed the Princess. "I promised you a visit, you remember, for I am such a great admirer of your genius. And our young friend here has been kind enough to bring me. We have only just returned from Norway, and my very first visit is for you."

She turned as she spoke, and bowed in an easy and gracious way to Pierre and Marie, François and Antoine, who were also there. Then she resumed: "Oh! my dear master, you have no idea how beautifully virginal Norway is! We all ought to go and drink at that new source of the Ideal, and we should

return purified, rejuvenated and capable of great renunciations!"

. As a matter of fact she had been well-nigh bored to death there. To make one's honeymoon journey to the land of the ice and snow, instead of to Italy, the hot land of the sun, was doubtless a very refined idea, which showed that no base materialism formed part of one's affections. It was the soul alone that travelled, and naturally it was fit that only kisses of the soul should be exchanged on the journey. Unfortunately, however, Hyacinthe had carried his symbolism so far as to exasperate Rosemonde, and on one occasion they had come to blows over it, and then to tears when this lover's quarrel had ended as many such quarrels do. Briefly, they had no longer deemed themselves pure enough for the companionship of the swans and the lakes of dreamland, and had therefore taken the first steamer that was sailing for France.

As it was altogether unnecessary to confess to everybody what a failure their journey had proved, the Princess abruptly brought her rapturous references to Norway to an end, and then explained: "By the way, do you know what I found awaiting me on my return? Why, I found my house pillaged, oh! completely pillaged! And in such a filthy condition, too! We at once recognised the mark of the beast, and thought of Bergaz's young friends."

Already on the previous day Guillaume had read in the newspapers that a band of young Anarchists had entered the Princess's little house by breaking a basement window. She had left it quite deserted, unprotected even by a caretaker; and the robbers had not

merely removed everything from the premises — including even the larger articles of furniture, but had lived there for a couple of days, bringing provisions in from outside, drinking all the wine in the cellars, and leaving every room in a most filthy and disgusting condition. On discovering all this, Rosemonde had immediately remembered the evening she had spent at the Chamber of Horrors in the company of Bergaz and his acolytes, Rossi and Sanfaute, who had heard her speak of her intended trip to Norway. The two young men had therefore been arrested, but Bergaz had so far escaped. The Princess was not greatly astonished by it all, for she had already been warned of the presence of dangerous characters among the mixed cosmopolitan set with which she associated. Janzen had told her in confidence of a number of villainous affairs which were attributed to Bergaz and his band. And now the Anarchist leader openly declared that Bergaz had sold himself to the police like Raphanel; and that the burglary at the Princess's residence had been planned by the police officials, who thereby hoped to cover the Anarchist cause with mire. If proof was wanted of this, added Janzen, it could be found in the fact that the police had allowed Bergaz to escape.

"I fancied that the newspapers might have exaggerated matters," said Guillaume, when the Princess had finished her story. "They are inventing such abominable things just now, in order to blacken the case of that poor devil Salvat."

"Oh! they've exaggerated nothing!" Rosemonde gaily rejoined. "As a matter of fact they have

omitted a number of particulars which were too filthy for publication. . . . For my part, I've merely had to go to an hotel. I'm very comfortable there; I was beginning to feel bored in that house of mine. . . . All the same, however, Anarchism is hardly a clean business, and I no longer like to say that I have any connection with it."

She again laughed, and then passed to another subject, asking Guillaume to tell her of his most recent researches, in order, no doubt, that she might show she knew enough chemistry to understand him. He had been rendered thoughtful, however, by the story of Bergaz and the burglary, and would only answer her in a general way.

Meantime, Hyacinthe was renewing his acquaintance with his schoolfellows, François and Antoine. He had accompanied the Princess to Montmartre against his own inclinations; but since she had taken to whipping him he had become afraid of her. The chemist's little home filled him with disdain, particularly as the chemist was a man of questionable reputation. Moreover, he thought it a duty to insist on his own superiority in the presence of those old schoolfellows of his, whom he found toiling away in the common rut, like other people.

"Ah! yes," said he to François, who was taking notes from a book spread open before him, "you are at the École Normale, I believe, and are preparing for your licentiate. Well, for my part, you know, the idea of being tied to anything horrifies me. I become quite stupid when there's any question of examination or competition. The only possible road

for one to follow is that of the Infinite. And between ourselves what dupery there is in science, how it narrows our horizon! It's just as well to remain a child with eyes gazing into the invisible. A child knows more than all your learned men."

François, who occasionally indulged in irony, pretended to share his opinion. "No doubt, no doubt," said he, "but one must have a natural disposition to remain a child. For my part, unhappily, I'm consumed by a desire to learn and know. It's deplorable, as I'm well aware, but I pass my days racking my brain over books. . . . I shall never know very much, that's certain; and perhaps that's the reason why I'm ever striving to learn a little more. You must at all events grant that work, like idleness, is a means of passing life, though of course it is a less elegant and æsthetic one."

"Less æsthetic, precisely," rejoined Hyacinthe. "Beauty lies solely in the unexpressed, and life is simply degraded when one introduces anything material into it."

Simpleton though he was in spite of the enormity of his pretensions, he doubtless detected that François had been speaking ironically. So he turned to Antoine, who had remained seated in front of a block he was engraving. It was the one which represented Lise reading in her garden; for he was ever taking it in hand again and touching it up in his desire to emphasise his indication of the girl's awakening to intelligence and life.

"So you engrave, I see," said Hyacinthe. "Well, since I renounced versification — a little poem I had

begun on the End of Woman — because words seemed to me so gross and cumbersome, mere paving-stones as it were, fit for labourers, I myself have had some idea of trying drawing, and perhaps engraving too. But what drawing can portray the mystery which lies beyond life, the only sphere that has any real existence and importance for us? With what pencil and on what kind of plate could one depict it? We should need something impalpable, something unheard of, which would merely suggest the essence of things and beings.”

“But it’s only by material means,” Antoine somewhat roughly replied, “that art can render the essence of things and beings, that is, their full significance as we understand it. To transcribe life is my great passion; and briefly life is the only mystery that there is in things and beings. When it seems to me that an engraving of mine lives, I’m well pleased, for I feel that I have created.”

Hyacinthe pouted by way of expressing his contempt of all fruitfulness. Any fool might beget offspring. It was the sexless idea, existing by itself, that was rare and exquisite. He tried to explain this, but became confused, and fell back on the conviction which he had brought back from Norway, that literature and art were done for in France, killed by baseness and excess of production.

“It’s evident!” said François gaily by way of conclusion. “To do nothing already shows that one has some talent!”

Meantime, Pierre and Marie listened and gazed around them, somewhat embarrassed by this strange

visit which had set the usually grave and peaceful workroom topsy-turvy. The little Princess, though, evinced much amiability, and on drawing near to Marie admired the wonderful delicacy of some embroidery she was finishing. Before leaving, moreover, Rosemonde insisted upon Guillaume inscribing his autograph in an album which Hyacinthe had to fetch from her carriage. The young man obeyed her with evident boredom. It could be seen that they were already weary of one another. Pending a fresh caprice, however, it amused Rosemonde to terrorize her sorry victim. When she at length led him away, after declaring to Guillaume that she should always regard that visit as a memorable incident in her life, she made the whole household smile by saying: "Oh! so your sons knew Hyacinthe at college. He's a good-natured little fellow, isn't he? and he would really be quite nice if he would only behave like other people."

That same day Janzen and Bache came to spend the evening with Guillaume. Once a week they now met at Montmartre, as they had formerly done at Neuilly. Pierre, on these occasions, went home very late, for as soon as Mère-Grand, Marie, and Guillaume's sons had retired for the night, there were endless chats in the workroom, whence Paris could be seen spangled with thousands of gas lights. Another visitor at these times was Théophile Morin, but he did not arrive before ten o'clock, as he was detained by the work of correcting his pupils' exercises or some other wearisome labour pertaining to his profession.

As soon as Guillaume had told the others of the

Princess's visit that afternoon, Janzen hastily exclaimed: "But she's mad, you know. When I first met her I thought for a moment that I might perhaps utilise her for the cause. She seemed so thoroughly convinced and bold! But I soon found that she was the craziest of women, and simply hungered for new emotions!"

Janzen was at last emerging from his wonted frigidity and mysteriousness. His cheeks were quite flushed. In all probability he had suffered from his rupture with the woman whom he had once called 'the Queen of the Anarchists,' and whose fortune and extensive circle of acquaintance had seemed to him such powerful weapons of propaganda.

"You know," said he, when he had calmed down, "it was the police who had her house pillaged and turned into a pigstye. Yes, in view of Salvat's trial, which is now near at hand, the idea was to damn Anarchism beyond possibility of even the faintest sympathy on the part of the *bourgeois*."

"Yes, she told me so," replied Guillaume, who had become attentive. "But I scarcely credit the story. If Bergaz had merely acted under such influence as you suggest, he would have been arrested with the others, just as Raphanel was taken with those whom he betrayed. Besides, I know something of Bergaz; he's a freebooter." Guillaume made a sorrowful gesture, and then in a saddened voice continued: "Oh, I can understand all claims and all legitimate reprisals. But theft, cynical theft for the purpose of profit and enjoyment, is beyond me! It lowers my hope of a better and more equitable form of society. Yes, that

burglary at the Princess's house has greatly distressed me."

An enigmatical smile, sharp like a knife, again played over Janzen's lips. "Oh! it's a matter of heredity with you!" said he. "The centuries of education and belief that lie behind you compel you to protest. All the same, however, when people won't make restoration, things must be taken from them. What worries me is that Bergaz should have sold himself just now. The public prosecutor will use that farcical burglary as a crushing argument when he asks the jury for Salvat's head."

Such was Janzen's hatred of the police that he stubbornly clung to his version of the affair. Perhaps, too, he had quarrelled with Bergaz, with whom he had at one time freely associated.

Guillaume, who understood that all discussion would be useless, contented himself with replying: "Ah! yes, Salvat! Everything is against that unhappy fellow, he is certain to be condemned. But you can't know, my friends, what a passion that affair of his puts me into. All my ideas of truth and justice revolt at the thought of it. He's a madman certainly; but there are so many excuses to be urged for him. At bottom he is simply a martyr who has followed the wrong track. And yet he has become the scapegoat, laden with the crimes of the whole nation, condemned to pay for one and all!"

Bache and Morin nodded without replying. They both professed horror of Anarchism; while Morin, forgetting that the word if not the thing dated from his first master Proudhon, clung to his Comtist doc-

trines, in the conviction that science alone would ensure the happiness and pacification of the nations. Bache, for his part, old mystical humanitarian that he was, claimed that the only solution would come from Fourier, who by decreeing an alliance of talent, labour and capital, had mapped out the future in a decisive manner. Nevertheless, both Bache and Morin were so discontented with the slow-paced *bourgeoise* Republic of the present day, and so hurt by the thought that everything was going from bad to worse through the flouting of their own particular ideas, that they were quite willing to wax indignant at the manner in which the conflicting parties of the time were striving to make use of Salvat in order to retain or acquire power.

"When one thinks," said Bache, "that this ministerial crisis of theirs has now been lasting for nearly three weeks! Every appetite is openly displayed, it's a most disgusting sight! Did you see in the papers this morning that the President has again been obliged to summon Vignon to the Elysée?"

"Oh! the papers," muttered Morin in his weary way, "I no longer read them! What's the use of doing so? They are so badly written, and they all lie!"

As Bache had said, the ministerial crisis was still dragging on. The President of the Republic, taking as his guide the debate in the Chamber of Deputies, by which the Barroux administration had been overthrown, had very properly sent for Vignon, the victor on that occasion, and entrusted him with the formation of a new ministry. It had seemed that this would be an easy task, susceptible of accomplishment in two

or three days at the utmost, for the names of the friends whom the young leader of the Radical party would bring to power with him had been freely mentioned for months past. But all sorts of difficulties had suddenly arisen. For ten days or so Vignon had struggled on amidst inextricable obstacles. Then, disheartened and disgusted, fearing, too, that he might use himself up and shut off the future if he persisted in his endeavours, he had been obliged to tell the President that he renounced the task. Forthwith the President had summoned other deputies, and questioned them until he had found one brave enough to make an attempt on his own account; whereupon incidents similar to those which had marked Vignon's endeavours had once more occurred. At the outset a list was drawn up with every prospect of being ratified within a few hours, but all at once hesitation arose, some pulled one way, some another; every effort was slowly paralysed till absolute failure resulted. It seemed as though the mysterious manœuvres which had hampered Vignon had begun again; it was as if some band of invisible plotters was, for some unknown purpose, doing its utmost to wreck every combination. A thousand hindrances arose with increasing force from every side — jealousy, dislike, and even betrayal were secretly prompted by expert agents, who employed every form of pressure, whether threats or promises, besides fanning and casting rival passions and interests into collision. Thus the President, greatly embarrassed by this posture of affairs, had again found it necessary to summon Vignon, who, after reflection and negotiation, now had an almost complete

list in his pocket, and seemed likely to perfect a new administration within the next forty-eight hours.

"Still it isn't settled," resumed Bache. "Well-informed people assert that Vignon will fail again as he did the first time. For my part I can't get rid of the idea that Duvillard's gang is pulling the strings, though for whose benefit is a mystery. You may be quite sure, however, that its chief purpose is to stifle the African Railways affair. If Monferrand were not so badly compromised I should almost suspect some trick on his part. Have you noticed that the "Globe," after throwing Barroux overboard in all haste, now refers to Monferrand every day with the most respectful sympathy? That's a grave sign; for it isn't Fonsègue's habit to show any solicitude for the vanquished. But what can one expect from that wretched Chamber! The only point certain is that something dirty is being plotted there."

"And that big dunderhead Mège who works for every party except his own!" exclaimed Morin; "what a dupe he is with that idea that he need merely overthrow first one cabinet and then another, in order to become the leader of one himself!"

The mention of Mège brought them all to agreement, for they unanimously hated him. Bache, although his views coincided on many points with those of the apostle of State Collectivism, judged each of his speeches, each of his actions, with pitiless severity. Janzen, for his part, treated the Collectivist leader as a mere reactionary *bourgeois*, who ought to be swept away one of the first. This hatred of Mège was indeed the common passion of Guillaume's friends. They

could occasionally show some justice for men who in no wise shared their ideas; but in their estimation it was an unpardonable crime for anybody to hold much the same views as themselves, without being absolutely in agreement with them on every possible point.

Their discussion continued, their various theories mingling or clashing till they passed from politics to the press, and grew excited over the denunciations which poured each morning from Sagnier's newspaper, like filth from the mouth of a sewer. Thereupon Guillaume, who had become absorbed in reverie while pacing to and fro according to his habit, suddenly exclaimed: "Ah! what dirty work it is that Sagnier does! Before long there won't be a single person, a single thing left on which he hasn't vomited! You think he's on your side, and suddenly he splashes you with mire! . . . By the way, he related yesterday that skeleton keys and stolen purses were found on Salvat when he was arrested in the Bois de Boulogne! It's always Salvat! He's the inexhaustible subject for articles. The mere mention of him suffices to send up a paper's sales! The bribe-takers of the African Railways shout 'Salvat!' to create a diversion. And the battles which wreck ministers are waged round his name. One and all set upon him and make use of him and beat him down!"

With that cry of revolt and compassion, the friends separated for the night. Pierre, who sat near the open window, overlooking the sparkling immensity of Paris, had listened to the others without speaking a word. He had once more been mastered by his doubts, the terrible struggle of his heart and mind; and no solu-

tion, no appeasement had come to him from all the contradictory views he had heard — the views of men who only united in predicting the disappearance of the old world, and could make no joint brotherly effort to rear the future world of truth and justice. In that vast city of Paris stretching below him, spangled with stars, glittering like the sky of a summer's night, Pierre also found a great enigma. It was like chaos, like a dim expanse of ashes dotted with sparks whence the coming aurora would arise. What future was being forged there, he wondered, what decisive word of salvation and happiness would come with the dawn, and wing its flight to every point of the horizon?

When Pierre, in his turn, was about to retire, Guillaume laid his hands upon his shoulders, and with much emotion gave him a long look. "Ah! my poor fellow," said he, "you've been suffering too for some days past, I have noticed it. But you are the master of your sufferings, for the struggle you have to overcome is simply in yourself, and you can subdue it; whereas one cannot subdue the world, when it is the world, its cruelty and injustice that make one suffer! Good night, be brave, act as your reason tells you, even if it makes you weep, and you will find peace surely enough."

Later on, when Pierre again found himself alone in his little house at Neuilly, where none now visited him save the shades of his father and mother, he was long kept awake by a supreme internal combat. He had never before felt so disgusted with the falsehood of his life, that cassock which he had persisted in wearing, though he was a priest in name only. Perhaps it

was all that he had beheld and heard at his brother's, the want and wretchedness of some, the wild, futile agitation of others, the need of improvement among mankind which remained paramount amidst every contradiction and form of weakness, that had made him more deeply conscious of the necessity of living in loyal and normal fashion in the broad daylight. He could no longer think of his former dream of leading the solitary life of a saintly priest when he was nothing of the kind, without a shiver of shame at having lied so long. And now it was quite decided, he would lie no longer, not even from feelings of compassion in order that others might retain their religious illusions. And yet how painful it was to have to divest himself of that gown which seemed to cling to his skin, and how heartrending the thought that if he did remove it he would be skinless, lacerated, infirm, unable, do what he might, to become like other men!

It was this recurring thought which again tortured him throughout that terrible night. Would life yet allow him to enter its fold? Had he not been branded with a mark which for ever condemned him to dwell apart? He thought he could feel his priestly vows burning his very flesh like red-hot iron. What use would it be for him to dress as men dress, if in reality he was never to be a man? He had hitherto lived in such a quivering state, in a sphere of renunciation and dreams! To know manhood never, to be too late for it, that thought filled him with terror. And when at last he made up his mind to fling aside his cassock, he did so from a simple sense of rectitude, for all his anguish remained.

When he returned to Montmartre on the following day, he wore a jacket and trousers of a dark colour. Neither an exclamation nor a glance that might have embarrassed him came from Mère-Grand or the three young men. Was not the change a natural one? They greeted him therefore in the quiet way that was usual with them; perhaps, with some increase of affection, as if to set him the more at his ease. Guillaume, however, ventured to smile good-naturedly. In that change he detected his own work. Cure was coming, as he had hoped it would come, by him and in his own home, amid the full sunlight, the life which ever streamed in through yonder window.

Marie, who on her side raised her eyes and looked at Pierre, knew nothing of the sufferings which he had endured through her simple and logical inquiry: "Why not take your cassock off?" She merely felt that by removing it he would be more at ease for his work.

"Oh, Pierre, just come and look!" she suddenly exclaimed. "I have been amusing myself with watching all the smoke which the wind is laying yonder over Paris. One might take it to be a huge fleet of ships shining in the sunlight. Yes, yes, golden ships, thousands of golden ships, setting forth from the ocean of Paris to enlighten and pacify the world!"

III

THE DAWN OF LOVE

A COUPLE of days afterwards, when Pierre was already growing accustomed to his new attire, and no longer gave it a thought, it so happened that on reaching Montmartre he encountered Abbé Rose outside the basilica of the Sacred Heart. The old priest, who at first was quite thunderstruck and scarcely able to recognise him, ended by taking hold of his hands and giving him a long look. Then with his eyes full of tears he exclaimed: "Oh! my son, so you have fallen into the awful state I feared! I never mentioned it, but I felt that God had withdrawn from you. Ah! nothing could wound my heart so cruelly as this."

Then, still trembling, he began to lead Pierre away as if to hide such a scandal from the few people who passed by; and at last, his strength failing him, he sank upon a heap of bricks lying on the grass of one of the adjoining workyards.

The sincere grief which his old and affectionate friend displayed upset Pierre far more than any angry reproaches or curses would have done. Tears had come to his own eyes, so acute was the suffering he experienced at this meeting, which he ought, however, to have foreseen. There was yet another wrenching, and one which made the best of their blood flow, in

that rupture between Pierre and the saintly man whose charitable dreams and hopes of salvation he had so long shared. There had been so many divine illusions, so many struggles for the relief of the masses, so much renunciation and forgiveness practised in common between them in their desire to hasten the harvest of the future! And now they were parting; he, Pierre, still young in years, was returning to life, leaving his aged companion to his vain waiting and his dreams.

In his turn, taking hold of Abbé Rose's hands, he gave expression to his sorrow. "Ah, my friend, my father," said he, "it is you alone that I regret losing, now that I am leaving my frightful torments behind. I thought that I was cured of them, but it has been sufficient for me to meet you, and my heart is rent again. . . . Don't weep for me, I pray you, don't reproach me for what I have done. It was necessary that I should do it. If I had consulted you, you would yourself have told me that it was better to renounce the priesthood than to remain a priest without faith or honour."

"Yes, yes," Abbé Rose gently responded, "you no longer had any faith left. I suspected it. And your rigidity and saintliness of life, in which I detected such great despair, made me anxious for you. How many hours did I not spend at times in striving to calm you! And you must listen to me again, you must still let me save you. I am not a sufficiently learned theologian to lead you back by discussing texts and dogmas; but in the name of Charity, my child, yes, in the name of Charity alone, reflect and

take up your task of consolation and hope once more."

Pierre had sat down beside Abbé Rose, in that deserted nook, at the very foot of the basilica. "Charity! charity!" he replied in passionate accents; "why, it is its nothingness and bankruptcy that have killed the priest there was in me. How can you believe that benevolence is sufficient, when you have spent your whole life in practising it without any other result than that of seeing want perpetuated and even increased, and without any possibility of naming the day when such abomination shall cease? . . . You think of the reward after death, do you not? The justice that is to reign in heaven? But that is not justice, it is dupery—dupery that has brought the world nothing but suffering for centuries past."

Then he reminded the old priest of their life in the Charonne district, when they had gone about together succouring children in the streets and parents in their hovels; the whole of those admirable efforts which, so far as Abbé Rose was concerned, had simply ended in blame from his superiors, and removal from proximity to his poor, under penalty of more severe punishment should he persist in compromising religion by the practice of blind benevolence without reason or object. And now, was he not, so to say, submerged beneath the ever-rising tide of want, aware that he would never, never be able to give enough even should he dispose of millions, and that he could only prolong the agony of the poor, who, even should they eat to-day, would starve again on the morrow? Thus he was powerless. The wound which he tried to dress

and heal, immediately reopened and spread, in such wise that all society would at last be stricken and carried off by it.

Quivering as he listened, and slowly shaking his white head, the old priest ended by replying: "What does that matter, my child? what does that matter? One must give, always give, give in spite of everything! There is no other joy on earth. . . . If dogmas worry you, content yourself with the Gospel, and even of that retain merely the promise of salvation through charity ——"

But at this Pierre's feelings revolted. He forgot that he was speaking to one of simple mind, who was all love and nothing else, and could therefore not follow him. "The trial has been made," he answered, "human salvation cannot be effected by charity, nothing but justice can accomplish it. That is the gathering cry which is going up from every nation. For nearly two thousand years now the Gospel has proved a failure. There has been no redemption; the sufferings of mankind are every whit as great and unjust as they were when Jesus came. And thus the Gospel is now but an abolished code, from which society can only draw things that are troublous and hurtful. Men must free themselves from it."

This was his final conviction. How strange the idea, thought he, of choosing as the world's social legislator one who lived, as Jesus lived, amidst a social system absolutely different from that of nowadays. The age was different, the very world was different. And if it were merely a question of retaining only such of the moral teaching of Jesus as seemed

human and eternal, was there not again a danger in applying immutable principles to the society of every age? No society could live under the strict law of the Gospel. Was not all order, all labour, all life destroyed by the teaching of Jesus? Did He not deny woman, the earth, eternal nature and the eternal fruitfulness of things and beings? Moreover, Catholicism had reared upon His primitive teaching such a frightful edifice of terror and oppression. The theory of original sin, that terrible heredity reviving with each creature born into the world, made no allowance as Science does for the corrective influences of education, circumstances and environment. There could be no more pessimist conception of man than this one which devotes him to the Devil from the instant of his birth, and pictures him as struggling against himself until the instant of his death. An impossible and absurd struggle, for it is a question of changing man in his entirety, killing the flesh, killing reason, destroying some guilty energy in each and every passion, and of pursuing the Devil to the very depths of the waters, mountains and forests, there to annihilate him with the very sap of the world. If this theory is accepted the world is but sin, a mere Hell of temptation and suffering, through which one must pass in order to merit Heaven. Ah! what an admirable instrument for absolute despotism is that religion of death, which the principle of charity alone has enabled men to tolerate, but which the need of justice will perforce sweep away. The poor man, who is the wretched dupe of it all, no longer believes in Paradise, but requires that each and all should be

rewarded according to their deserts upon this earth; and thus eternal life becomes the good goddess, and desire and labour the very laws of the world, while the fruitfulness of woman is again honoured, and the idiotic nightmare of Hell is replaced by glorious Nature whose travail knows no end. Leaning upon modern Science, clear Latin reason sweeps away the ancient Semitic conception of the Gospel.

"For eighteen hundred years," concluded Pierre, "Christianity has been hampering the march of mankind towards truth and justice. And mankind will only resume its evolution on the day when it abolishes Christianity, and places the Gospel among the works of the wise, without taking it any longer as its absolute and final law."

But Abbé Rose raised his trembling hands: "Be quiet, be quiet, my child!" he cried; "you are blaspheming! I knew that doubt distracted you; but I thought you so patient, so able to bear suffering, that I relied on your spirit of renunciation and resignation. What can have happened to make you leave the Church in this abrupt and violent fashion? I no longer recognise you. Sudden passion has sprung up in you, an invincible force seems to carry you away. What is it? Who has changed you, tell me?"

Pierre listened in astonishment. "No," said he, "I assure you, I am such as you have known me, and in all this there is but an inevitable result and finish. Who could have influenced me, since nobody has entered my life? What new feeling could transform me, since I find none in me? I am the same as before, the same assuredly."

Still there was a touch of hesitation in his voice. Was it really true that there had been no change within him? He again questioned himself, and there came no clear answer; decidedly, he would find nothing. It was all but a delightful awakening, an overpowering desire for life, a longing to open his arms widely enough to embrace everyone and everything. Indeed, a breeze of joy seemed to raise him from the ground and carry him along.

Although Abbé Rose was too innocent of heart to understand things clearly, he again shook his head and thought of the snares which the Devil is ever setting for men. He was quite overwhelmed by Pierre's defection. Continuing his efforts to win him back, he made the mistake of advising him to consult Monseigneur Martha, for he hoped that a prelate of such high authority would find the words necessary to restore him to his faith. Pierre, however, boldly replied that if he was leaving the Church it was partly because it comprised such a man as Martha, such an artisan of deception and despotism, one who turned religion into corrupt diplomacy, and dreamt of winning men back to God by dint of ruses. Thereupon Abbé Rose, rising to his feet, could find no other argument in his despair than that of pointing to the basilica which stood beside them, square, huge and massive, and still waiting for its dome.

"That is God's abode, my child," said he, "the edifice of expiation and triumph, of penitence and forgiveness. You have said mass in it, and now you are leaving it sacrilegiously and forswearing yourself!"

But Pierre also had risen; and buoyed up by a

sudden rush of health and strength he answered: "No, no! I am leaving it willingly, as one leaves a dark vault, to return into the open air and the broad sunlight. God does not dwell there; the only purpose of that huge edifice is to defy reason, truth and justice; it has been erected on the highest spot that could be found, like a citadel of error that dominates, insults and threatens Paris!"

Then seeing that the old priest's eyes were again filling with tears, and feeling on his own side so pained by their rupture that he began to sob, Pierre wished to go away. "Farewell! farewell!" he stammered.

But Abbé Rose caught him in his arms and kissed him, as if he were a rebellious son who yet had remained the dearest. "No, not farewell, not farewell, my child," he answered; "say rather till we meet again. Promise me that we shall see each other again, at least among those who starve and weep. It is all very well for you to think that charity has become bankrupt, but shall we not always love one another in loving our poor?"

Then they parted.

On becoming the companion of his three big nephews, Pierre had in a few lessons learnt from them how to ride a bicycle, in order that he might occasionally accompany them on their morning excursions. He went twice with them and Marie along the somewhat roughly paved roads in the direction of the Lake of Enghien. Then one morning when the young woman had promised to take him and Antoine as far as the forest of Saint-Germain, it was found at the last moment that Antoine could not come. Marie was already

drèssed in a chemisette of fawn-coloured silk, and a little jacket and "rationals" of black serge, and it was such a warm, bright April day that she was not inclined to renounce her trip.

"Well, so much the worse!" she gaily said to Pierre, "I shall take you with me, there will only be the pair of us. I really want you to see how delightful it is to bowl over a good road between the beautiful trees."

However, as Pierre was not yet a very expert rider, they decided that they would take the train as far as Maisons-Laffitte, whence they would proceed on their bicycles to the forest, cross it in the direction of Saint-Germain, and afterwards return to Paris by train.

"You will be here for *déjeuner*, won't you?" asked Guillaume, whom this freak amused, and who looked with a smile at his brother. The latter, like Marie, was in black: jacket, breeches and stockings all of the same hue.

"Oh, certainly!" replied Marie. "It's now barely eight o'clock, so we have plenty of time. Still you need not wait for us, you know, we shall always find our way back."

It was a delightful morning. When they started, Pierre could fancy himself with a friend of his own sex, so that this trip together through the warm sunlight seemed quite natural. Doubtless their costumes, which were so much alike, conduced to the gay brotherly feeling he experienced. But beyond all this there was the healthfulness of the open air, the delight which exercise brings, the pleasure of roaming in all freedom through the midst of nature.

On taking the train they found themselves alone in

a compartment, and Marie once more began to talk of her college days. "Ah! you've no idea," said she, "what fine games at baseball we used to have at Fénelon! We used to tie up our skirts with string so as to run the better, for we were not allowed to wear rationals like I'm wearing now. And there were shrieks, and rushes, and pushes, till our hair waved about and we were quite red with exercise and excitement. Still that didn't prevent us from working in the class-rooms. On the contrary! Directly we were at study we fought again, each striving to learn the most and reach the top of the class!"

She laughed gaily as she thus recalled her school life, and Pierre glanced at her with candid admiration, so pink and healthy did she look under her little hat of black felt, which a long silver pin kept in position. Her fine dark hair was caught up behind, showing her neck, which looked as fresh and delicate as a child's. And never before had she seemed to him so supple and so strong.

"Ah," she continued in a jesting way, "there is nothing like rationals, you know! To think that some women are foolish and obstinate enough to wear skirts when they go out cycling!"

Then, as he declared — just by way of speaking the truth, and without the faintest idea of gallantry — that she looked very nice indeed in her costume, she responded: "Oh! I don't count. I'm not a beauty. I simply enjoy good health. . . . But can you understand it? To think that women have an unique opportunity of putting themselves at their ease, and releasing their limbs from prison, and yet they won't

do so! If they think that they look the prettier in short skirts like schoolgirls they are vastly mistaken! And as for any question of modesty, well, it seems to me that it is infinitely less objectionable for women to wear rationals than to bare their bosoms at balls and theatres and dinners as society ladies do." Then, with a gesture of girlish impulsiveness, she added: "Besides, does one think of such things when one's rolling along? . . . Yes, rationals are the only things, skirts are rank heresy!"

In her turn, she was now looking at him, and was struck by the extraordinary change which had come over him since the day when he had first appeared to her, so sombre in his long cassock, with his face emaciated, livid, almost distorted by anguish. It was like a resurrection, for now his countenance was bright, his lofty brow had all the serenity of hope, while his eyes and lips once more showed some of the confident tenderness which sprang from his everlasting thirst for love, self-bestowal and life. All mark of the priesthood had already left him, save that where he had been tonsured his hair still remained rather short.

"Why are you looking at me?" he asked.

"I was noticing how much good has been done you by work and the open air," she frankly answered; "I much prefer you as you are. You used to look so poorly. I thought you really ill."

"So I was," said he.

The train, however, was now stopping at Maisons-Laffitte. They alighted from it, and at once took the road to the forest. This road rises gently till it

reaches the Maisons gate, and on market days it is often crowded with carts.

"I shall go first, eh?" said Marie gaily, "for vehicles still alarm you."

Thereupon she started ahead, but every now and again she turned with a smile to see if he were following her. And every time they overtook and passed a cart she spoke to him of the merits of their machines, which both came from the Grandidier works. They were "Lisettes," examples of those popular bicycles which Thomas had helped to perfect, and which the Bon Marché now sold in large numbers for 250 francs apiece. Perhaps they were rather heavy in appearance, but on the other hand their strength was beyond question. They were just the machines for a long journey, so Marie declared.

"Ah! here's the forest," she at last exclaimed. "We have now reached the end of the rise; and you will see what splendid avenues there are. One can bowl along them as on a velvet carpet."

Pierre had already joined her, and they rode on side by side along the broad straight avenue fringed with magnificent trees.

"I am all right now," said Pierre; "your pupil will end by doing you honour, I hope."

"Oh! I've no doubt of it. You already have a very good seat, and before long you'll leave me behind, for a woman is never a man's equal in a matter like this. At the same time, however, what a capital education cycling is for women!"

"In what way?"

"Oh! I've certain ideas of my own on the subject;

and if ever I have a daughter I shall put her on a bicycle as soon as she's ten years old, just to teach her how to conduct herself in life."

"Education by experience, eh?"

"Yes, why not? Look at the big girls who are brought up hanging to their mothers' apron strings. Their parents frighten them with everything, they are allowed no initiative, no exercise of judgment or decision, so that at times they hardly know how to cross a street, to such a degree does the traffic alarm them. Well, I say that a girl ought to be set on a bicycle in her childhood, and allowed to follow the roads. She will then learn to open her eyes, to look out for stones and avoid them, and to turn in the right direction at every bend or crossway. If a vehicle comes up at a gallop or any other danger presents itself, she'll have to make up her mind on the instant, and steer her course firmly and properly if she does not wish to lose a limb. Briefly, doesn't all this supply proper apprenticeship for one's will, and teach one how to conduct and defend oneself?"

Pierre had begun to laugh. "You will all be too healthy," he remarked.

"Oh, one must be healthy if one wants to be happy. But what I wish to convey is that those who learn to avoid stones and to turn properly along the highways will know how to overcome difficulties, and take the best decisions in after life. The whole of education lies in knowledge and energy."

"So women are to be emancipated by cycling?"

"Well, why not? It may seem a droll idea; but see what progress has been made already. By wear-

ing rational women free their limbs from prison; then the facilities which cycling affords people for going out together tend to greater intercourse and equality between the sexes; the wife and the children can follow the husband everywhere, and friends like ourselves are at liberty to roam hither and thither without astonishing anybody. In this lies the greatest advantage of all: one takes a bath of air and sunshine, one goes back to nature, to the earth, our common mother, from whom one derives fresh strength and gaiety of heart! Just look how delightful this forest is. And how healthful the breeze that inflates our lungs! Yes, it all purifies, calms and encourages one."

The forest, which was quite deserted on week days, stretched out in quietude on either hand, with sunlight filtering between its deep bands of trees. At that hour the rays only illumined one side of the avenue, there gilding the lofty drapery of verdure; on the other, the shady side, the greenery seemed almost black. It was truly delightful to skim, swallow-like, over that royal avenue in the fresh atmosphere, amidst the waving of grass and foliage, whose powerful scent swept against one's face. Pierre and Marie scarcely touched the soil: it was as if wings had come to them, and were carrying them on with a regular flight, through alternate patches of shade and sunshine, and all the scattered vitality of the far-reaching, quivering forest, with its mosses, its sources, its animal and its insect life.

Marie would not stop when they reached the crossway of the Croix de Noailles, a spot where people

congregate on Sundays, for she was acquainted with secluded nooks which were far more charming resting-places. When they reached the slope going down towards Poissy, she roused Pierre, and they let their machines rush on. Then came all the joyous intoxication of speed, the rapturous feeling of darting along breathlessly while the grey road flees beneath one, and the trees on either hand turn like the opening folds of a fan. The breeze blows tempestuously, and one fancies that one is journeying yonder towards the horizon, the infinite, which ever and ever recedes. It is like boundless hope, delivery from every shackle, absolute freedom of motion through space. And nothing can inspirit one more gloriously — one's heart leaps as if one were in the very heavens.

"We are not going to Poissy, you know!" Marie suddenly cried; "we have to turn to the left."

They took the road from Achères to the Loges, which ascends and contracts, thus bringing one closer together in the shade. Gradually slowing down, they began to exert themselves in order to make their way up the incline. This road was not so good as the others, it had been gullied by the recent heavy rains, and sand and gravel lay about. But then is there not even a pleasure in effort?

"You will get used to it," said Marie to Pierre; "it's amusing to overcome obstacles. For my part I don't like roads which are invariably smooth. A little ascent which does not try one's limbs too much rouses and inspirits one. And it is so agreeable to find oneself strong, and able to go on and on in spite of rain, or wind, or hills."

Her bright humour and courage quite charmed Pierre. "And so," said he, "we are off for a journey round France?"

"No, no, we've arrived. You won't dislike a little rest, eh? And now, tell me, wasn't it worth our while to come on here and rest in such a nice fresh, quiet spot."

She nimbly sprang off her machine and, bidding him follow her, turned into a path, along which she went some fifty paces. They placed their bicycles against some trees, and then found themselves in a little clearing, the most exquisite, leafy nest that one could dream of. The forest here assumed an aspect of secluded sovereign beauty. The springtide had endowed it with youth, the foliage was light and virginal, like delicate green lace flecked with gold by the sun-rays. And from the herbage and the surrounding thickets arose a breath of life, laden with all the powerful aroma of the earth.

"It's not too warm as yet, fortunately," exclaimed Marie, as she seated herself at the foot of a young oak-tree, against which she leant. "In July ladies get rather red by the time they reach this spot, and all the powder comes off their faces. However, one can't always be beautiful."

"Well, I'm not cold by any means," replied Pierre, as he sat at her feet wiping his forehead.

She laughed, and answered that she had never before seen him with such a colour. Then they began to talk like children, like two young friends, finding a source of gaiety in the most puerile things. She was somewhat anxious about his health, however, and

would not allow him to remain in the cool shade, as he felt so very warm. In order to tranquillise her, he had to change his place and seat himself with his back to the sun. Then a little later he saved her from a large black spider, which had caught itself in the wavy hair on the nape of her neck. At this all her womanly nature reappeared, and she shrieked with terror. "How stupid it was to be afraid of a spider!" she exclaimed a moment afterwards; yet, in spite of her efforts to master herself, she remained pale and trembling.

Silence at last fell between them, and they looked at one another with a smile. In the midst of that delicate greenery they felt drawn together by frank affection—the affection of brother and sister, so it seemed to them. It made Marie very happy to think that she had taken an interest in Pierre, and that his return to health was largely her own work. However, their eyes never fell, their hands never met, even as they sat there toying with the grass, for they were as pure, as unconscious of all evil, as were the lofty oaks around them.

At last Marie noticed that time was flying. "You know that they expect us back to lunch," she exclaimed. "We ought to be off."

Thereupon they rose, wheeled their bicycles back to the highway, and starting off again at a good pace passed the Loges and reached Saint-Germain by the fine avenue which conducts to the château. It charmed them to take their course again side by side, like birds of equal flight. Their little bells jingled, their chains rustled lightly, and a fresh breeze swept past them as

they resumed their talk, quite at ease, and so linked together by friendship that they seemed far removed from all the rest of the world.

They took the train from Saint-Germain to Paris, and on the journey Pierre suddenly noticed that Marie's cheeks were purpling. There were two ladies with them in the compartment.

"Ah!" said he, "so you feel warm in your turn now?"

But she protested the contrary, her face glowing more and more brightly as she spoke, as if some sudden feeling of shame quite upset her. "No, I'm not warm," said she; "just feel my hands. . . . But how ridiculous it is to blush like this without any reason for it!"

He understood her. This was one of those involuntary blushing fits which so distressed her, and which, as Mère-Grand had remarked, brought her heart to her very cheeks. There was no cause for it, as she herself said. After slumbering in all innocence in the solitude of the forest her heart had begun to beat, despite herself.

Meantime, over yonder at Montmartre, Guillaume had spent his morning in preparing some of that mysterious powder, the cartridges of which he concealed upstairs in Mère-Grand's bedroom. Great danger attended this manufacture. The slightest forgetfulness while he was manipulating the ingredients, any delay, too, in turning off a tap, might lead to a terrible explosion, which would annihilate the building and all who might be in it. For this reason he preferred to work when he was alone, so that on the one hand

there might be no danger for others, and on the other less likelihood of his own attention being diverted from his task. That morning, as it happened, his three sons were working in the room, and Mère-Grand sat sewing near the furnace. Truth to tell, she did not count, for she scarcely ever left her place, feeling quite at ease there, however great might be the peril. Indeed, she had become so well acquainted with the various phases of Guillaume's delicate operations, and their terrible possibilities, that she would occasionally give him a helping hand.

That morning, as she sat there mending some house linen, — her eyesight still being so keen that in spite of her seventy years she wore no spectacles, — she now and again glanced at Guillaume as if to make sure that he forgot nothing. Then feeling satisfied, she would once more bend over her work. She remained very strong and active. Her hair was only just turning white, and she had kept all her teeth, while her face still looked refined, though it was slowly withering with age and had acquired an expression of some severity. As a rule she was a woman of few words; her life was one of activity and good management. When she opened her lips it was usually to give advice, to counsel reason, energy and courage. For some time past she had been growing more taciturn than ever, as if all her attention were claimed by the household matters which were in her sole charge; still, her fine eyes would rest thoughtfully on those about her, on the three young men, and on Guillaume, Marie and Pierre, who all obeyed her as if she were their acknowledged queen. If she looked at them in that

pensive way, was it that she foresaw certain changes, and noticed certain incidents of which the others remained unconscious? Perhaps so. At all events she became even graver, and more attentive than in the past. It was as if she were waiting for some hour to strike when all her wisdom and authority would be required.

"Be careful, Guillaume," she at last remarked, as she once more looked up from her sewing. "You seem absent-minded this morning. Is anything worrying you?"

He glanced at her with a smile. "No, nothing, I assure you," he replied. "But I was thinking of our dear Marie, who was so glad to go off to the forest in this bright sunshine."

Antoine, who heard the remark, raised his head, while his brothers remained absorbed in their work. "What a pity it is that I had this block to finish," said he; "I would willingly have gone with her."

"Oh, no matter," his father quietly rejoined. "Pierre is with her, and he is very cautious."

For another moment Mère-Grand continued scrutinising Guillaume; then she once more reverted to her sewing.

If she exercised such sway over the home and all its inmates, it was by reason of her long devotion, her intelligence, and the kindness with which she ruled. Uninfluenced by any religious faith, and disregarding all social conventionalities, her guiding principle in everything was the theory of human justice which she had arrived at after suffering so grievously from the injustice that had killed her husband. She put her views into practice with wonderful courage, knowing

nothing of any prejudices, but accomplishing her duty, such as she understood it, to the very end. And in the same way as she had first devoted herself to her husband, and next to her daughter Marguerite, so at present she devoted herself to Guillaume and his sons. Pierre, whom she had first studied with some anxiety, had now, too, become a member of her family, a dweller in the little realm of happiness which she ruled. She had doubtless found him worthy of admission into it, though she did not reveal the reason why. After days and days of silence she had simply said, one evening, to Guillaume, that he had done well in bringing his brother to live among them.

Time flew by as she sat sewing and thinking. Towards noon Guillaume, who was still at work, suddenly remarked to her: "As Marie and Pierre haven't come back, we had better let the lunch wait a little while. Besides, I should like to finish what I'm about."

Another quarter of an hour then elapsed. Finally, the three young men rose from their work, and went to wash their hands at a tap in the garden.

"Marie is very late," now remarked Mère-Grand. "We must hope that nothing has happened to her."

"Oh! she rides so well," replied Guillaume. "I'm more anxious on account of Pierre."

At this the old lady again fixed her eyes on him, and said: "But Marie will have guided Pierre; they already ride very well together."

"No doubt; still I should be better pleased if they were back home."

Then all at once, fancying that he heard the ring of

a bicycle bell, he called out: "There they are!" And forgetting everything else in his satisfaction, he quitted his furnace and hastened into the garden in order to meet them.

Mère-Grand, left to herself, quietly continued sewing, without a thought that the manufacture of Guillaume's powder was drawing to an end in an apparatus near her. A couple of minutes later, however, when Guillaume came back, saying that he had made a mistake, his eyes suddenly rested on his furnace, and he turned quite livid. Brief as had been his absence the exact moment when it was necessary to turn off a tap in order that no danger might attend the preparation of his powder had already gone by; and now, unless someone should dare to approach that terrible tap, and boldly turn it, a fearful explosion might take place. Doubtless it was too late already, and whoever might have the bravery to attempt the feat would be blown to pieces.

Guillaume himself had often run a similar risk of death with perfect composure. But on this occasion he remained as if rooted to the floor, unable to take a step, paralysed by the dread of annihilation. He shuddered and stammered in momentary expectation of a catastrophe which would hurl the work-shop to the heavens.

"Mère-Grand, Mère-Grand," he stammered. "The apparatus, the tap . . . it is all over, all over!"

The old woman had raised her head without as yet understanding him. "Eh, what?" said she; "what is the matter with you?" Then, on seeing how distorted were his features, how he recoiled as if mad

with terror, she glanced at the furnace and realised the danger. "Well, but it's simple enough," said she; "it's only necessary to turn off the tap, eh?"

Thereupon, without any semblance of haste, in the most easy and natural manner possible, she deposited her needlework on a little table, rose from her chair, and turned off the tap with a light but firm hand. "There! it's done," said she. "But why didn't you do it yourself, my friend?"

He had watched her in bewilderment, chilled to the bones, as if touched by the hand of death. And when some colour at last returned to his cheeks, and he found himself still alive in front of the apparatus whence no harm could now come, he heaved a deep sigh and again shuddered. "Why did I not turn it off?" he repeated. "It was because I felt afraid."

At that very moment Marie and Pierre came into the work-shop all chatter and laughter, delighted with their excursion, and bringing with them the bright joyousness of the sunlight. The three brothers, Thomas, Francis and Antoine, were jesting with them, and trying to make them confess that Pierre had at least fought a battle with a cow on the high road, and ridden into a cornfield. All at once, however, they became quite anxious, for they noticed that their father looked terribly upset.

"My lads," said he, "I've just been a coward. Ah! it's a curious feeling, I had never experienced it before."

Thereupon he recounted his fears of an accident, and how quietly Mère-Grand had saved them all from certain death. She waved her hand, however, as if to

say that there was nothing particularly heroic in turning off a tap. The young men's eyes nevertheless filled with tears, and one after the other they went to kiss her with a fervour instinct with all the gratitude and worship they felt for her. She had been devoting herself to them ever since their infancy, she had now just given them a new lease of life. Marie also threw herself into her arms, kissing her with gratitude and emotion. Mère-Grand herself was the only one who did not shed tears. She strove to calm them, begging them to exaggerate nothing and to remain sensible.

"Well, you must at all events let me kiss you as the others have done," Guillaume said to her, as he recovered his self-possession. "I at least owe you that. And Pierre, too, shall kiss you, for you are now as good for him as you have always been for us."

At table, when it was at last possible for them to lunch, he reverted to that attack of fear which had left him both surprised and ashamed. He who for years had never once thought of death had for some time past found ideas of caution in his mind. On two occasions recently he had shuddered at the possibility of a catastrophe. How was it that a longing for life had come to him in his decline? Why was it that he now wished to live? At last with a touch of tender affection in his gaiety, he remarked: "Do you know, Marie, I think it is my thoughts of you that make me a coward. If I've lost my bravery it's because I risk something precious when any danger arises. Happiness has been entrusted to my charge. Just now when I fancied that we were all going to die, I thought

I could see you, and my fear of losing you froze and paralysed me."

Marie indulged in a pretty laugh. Allusions to her coming marriage were seldom made; however, she invariably greeted them with an air of happy affection. "Another six weeks!" she simply said.

Thereupon Mère-Grand, who had been looking at them, turned her eyes towards Pierre. He, however, like the others was listening with a smile.

"That's true," said the old lady, "you are to be married in six weeks' time. So I did right to prevent the house from being blown up."

At this the young men made merry; and the repast came to an end in very joyous fashion.

During the afternoon, however, Pierre's heart gradually grew heavy. Marie's words constantly returned to him: "Another six weeks!" Yes, it was indeed true, she would then be married. But it seemed to him that he had never previously known it, never for a moment thought of it. And later on, in the evening, when he was alone in his room at Neuilly, his heart-pain became intolerable. Those words tortured him. Why was it that they had not caused him any suffering when they were spoken, why had he greeted them with a smile? And why had such cruel anguish slowly followed? All at once an idea sprang up in his mind, and became an overwhelming certainty. He loved Marie, he loved her as a lover, with a love so intense that he might die from it.

With this sudden consciousness of his passion everything became clear and plain. He had been going perforce towards that love ever since he had first met

Marie. The emotion into which the young woman had originally thrown him had seemed to him a feeling of repulsion, but afterwards he had been slowly conquered, all his torments and struggles ending in this love for her. It was indeed through her that he had at last found quietude. And the delightful morning which he had spent with her that day, appeared to him like a betrothal morning, in the depths of the happy forest. Nature had resumed her sway over him, delivered him from his sufferings, made him strong and healthy once more, and given him to the woman he adored. The quiver he had experienced, the happiness he had felt, his communion with the trees, the heavens, and every living creature—all those things which he had been unable to explain, now acquired a clear meaning which transported him. In Marie alone lay his cure, his hope, his conviction that he would be born anew and at last find happiness. In her company he had already forgotten all those distressing problems which had formerly haunted him and bowed him down. For a week past he had not once thought of death, which had so long been the companion of his every hour. All the conflict of faith and doubt, the distress roused by the idea of nihilism, the anger he had felt at the unjust sufferings of mankind, had been swept away by her fresh cool hands. She was so healthy herself, so glad to live, that she had imparted a taste for life even to him. Yes, it was simply that: she was making him a man, a worker, a lover once more.

Then he suddenly remembered Abbé Rose and his painful conversation with that saintly man. The old

priest, whose heart was so ingenuous, and who knew nothing of love and passion, was nevertheless the only one who had understood the truth. He had told Pierre that he was changed, that there was another man in him. And he, Pierre, had foolishly and stubbornly declared that he was the same as he had always been; whereas Marie had already transformed him, bringing all nature back to his breast—all nature, with its sunlit countrysides, its fructifying breezes, and its vast heavens, whose glow ripens its crops. That indeed was why he had felt so exasperated with Catholicism, that religion of death; that was why he had shouted that the Gospel was useless, and that the world awaited another law—a law of terrestrial happiness, human justice and living love and fruitfulness!

Ah, but Guillaume? Then a vision of his brother rose before Pierre, that brother who loved him so fondly, and who had carried him to his home of toil, quietude and affection, in order to cure him of his sufferings. If he knew Marie it was simply because Guillaume had chosen that he should know her. And again Marie's words recurred to him: "Another six weeks!" Yes, in six weeks his brother would marry the young woman. This thought was like a stab in Pierre's heart. Still, he did not for one moment hesitate: if he must die of his love, he would die of it, but none should ever know it, he would conquer himself, he would flee to the ends of the earth should he ever feel the faintest cowardice. Rather than bring a moment's pain to that brother who had striven to resuscitate him, who was the artisan of the passion now consuming him, who had given him his whole

heart and all he had—he would condemn himself to perpetual torture. And indeed, torture was coming back; for in losing Marie he could but sink into the distress born of the consciousness of his nothingness. As he lay in bed, unable to sleep, he already experienced a return of his abominable torments—the negation of everything, the feeling that everything was useless, that the world had no significance, and that life was only worthy of being cursed and denied. And then the shudder born of the thought of death returned to him. Ah! to die, to die without even having lived!

The struggle was a frightful one. Until daybreak he sobbed in martyrdom. Why had he taken off his cassock? He had done so at a word from Marie; and now another word from her gave him the despairing idea of donning it once more. One could not escape from so fast a prison. That black gown still clung to his skin. He fancied that he had divested himself of it, and yet it was still weighing on his shoulders, and his wisest course would be to bury himself in it for ever. By donning it again he would at least wear mourning for his manhood.

All at once, however, a fresh thought upset him. Why should he struggle in that fashion? Marie did not love him. There had been nothing between them to indicate that she cared for him otherwise than as a charming, tender-hearted sister. It was Guillaume that she loved, no doubt. Then he pressed his face to his pillow to stifle his sobs, and once more swore that he would conquer himself and turn a smiling face upon their happiness.

IV

TRIAL AND SENTENCE

HAVING returned to Montmartre on the morrow Pierre suffered so grievously that he did not show himself there on the two following days. He preferred to remain at home where there was nobody to notice his feverishness. On the third morning, however, whilst he was still in bed, strengthless and full of despair, he was both surprised and embarrassed by a visit from Guillaume.

"I must needs come to you," said the latter, "since you forsake us. I've come to fetch you to attend Salvat's trial, which takes place to-day. I had no end of trouble to secure two places. Come, get up, we'll have *déjeuner* in town, so as to reach the court early."

Then, while Pierre was hastily dressing, Guillaume, who on his side seemed thoughtful and worried that morning, began to question him: "Have you anything to reproach us with?" he asked.

"No, nothing. What an idea!" was Pierre's reply.

"Then why have you been staying away? We had got into the habit of seeing you every day, but all at once you disappear."

Pierre vainly sought a falsehood, and all his composure fled. "I had some work to do here," said he,

"and then, too, my gloomy ideas came back to me, and I didn't want to go and sadden you all."

At this Guillaume hastily waved his hand. "If you fancy that your absence enlivens us you're mistaken," he replied. "Marie, who is usually so well and happy, had such a bad headache on the day before yesterday that she was obliged to keep her room. And she was ill at ease and nervous and silent again yesterday. We spent a very unpleasant day."

As he spoke Guillaume looked Pierre well in the face, his frank loyal eyes clearly revealing the suspicions which had come to him, but which he would not express in words.

Pierre, quite dismayed by the news of Marie's indisposition, and frightened by the idea of betraying his secret, thereupon managed to tell a lie. "Yes, she wasn't very well on the day when we went cycling," he quietly responded. "But I assure you that I have had a lot to do here. When you came in just now I was about to get up and go to your house as usual."

Guillaume kept his eyes on him for a moment longer. Then, either believing him or deciding to postpone his search for the truth to some future time, he began speaking affectionately on other subjects. With his keen brotherly love, however, there was blended such a quiver of impending distress, of unconfessed sorrow, which possibly he did not yet realise, that Pierre in his turn began to question him. "And you," said he, "are you ill? You seem to me to have lost your usual serenity."

"I? Oh! I'm not ill. Only I can't very well retain my composure; Salvat's affair distresses me

exceedingly, as you must know. They will all end by driving me mad with the monstrous injustice they show towards that unhappy fellow."

Thenceforward Guillaume went on talking of Salvat in a stubborn passionate way, as if he wished to find an explanation of all his pain and unrest in that affair. While he and Pierre were partaking of *déjeuner* at a little restaurant on the Boulevard du Palais he related how deeply touched he was by the silence which Salvat had preserved with regard both to the nature of the explosive employed in the bomb and the few days' work which he had once done at his house. It was, thanks to this silence, that he, Guillaume, had not been worried or even summoned as a witness. Then, in his emotion, he reverted to his invention, that formidable engine which would ensure omnipotence to France, as the great initiatory and liberative power of the world. The results of the researches which had occupied him for ten years past were now out of danger and in all readiness, so that if occasion required they might at once be delivered to the French government. And, apart from certain scruples which came to him at the thought of the unworthiness of French financial and political society, he was simply delaying any further steps in the matter until his marriage with Marie, in order that he might associate her with the gift of universal peace which he imagined he was about to bestow upon the world.

It was through Bertheroy and with great difficulty that Guillaume had managed to secure two seats in court for Salvat's trial. When he and Pierre presented themselves for admission at eleven o'clock,

they fancied that they would never be able to enter. The large gates of the Palace of Justice were kept closed, several passages were fenced off, and terror seemed to reign in the deserted building, as if indeed the judges feared some sudden invasion of bomb-laden Anarchists. Each door and barrier, too, was guarded by soldiers, with whom the brothers had to parley. When they at last entered the Assize Court they found it already crowded with people, who were apparently quite willing to suffocate there for an hour before the arrival of the judges, and to remain motionless for some seven or eight hours afterwards, since it was reported that the authorities wished to get the case over in a single sitting. In the small space allotted to the standing public there was a serried mass of sightseers who had come up from the streets, a few companions and friends of Salvat having managed to slip in among them. In the other compartment, where witnesses are generally huddled together on oak benches, were those spectators who had been allowed admittance by favour, and these were so numerous and so closely packed that here and there they almost sat upon one another's knees. Then, in the well of the court and behind the bench, were rows of chairs set out as for some theatrical performance, and occupied by privileged members of society, politicians, leading journalists, and ladies. And meantime a number of gowned advocates sought refuge wherever chance offered, crowding into every vacant spot, every available corner.

Pierre had never before visited the Assize Court, and its appearance surprised him. He had expected

much pomp and majesty, whereas this temple of human justice seemed to him small and dismal and of doubtful cleanliness. The bench was so low that he could scarcely see the armchairs of the presiding judge and his two assessors. Then he was struck by the profusion of old oak panels, balustrades and benches, which helped to darken the apartment, whose wall hangings were of olive green, while a further display of oak panelling appeared on the ceiling above. From the seven narrow and high-set windows with scanty little white curtains there fell a pale light which sharply divided the court. On one hand one saw the dock and the defending counsel's seat steeped in frigid light, while, on the other, was the little, isolated jury box in the shade. This contrast seemed symbolical of justice, impersonal and uncertain, face to face with the accused, whom the light stripped bare, probed as it were to his very soul. Then, through a kind of grey mist above the bench, in the depths of the stern and gloomy scene, one could vaguely distinguish the heavy painting of "Christ Crucified." A white bust of the Republic alone showed forth clearly against the dark wall above the dock where Salvat would presently appear. The only remaining seats that Guillaume and Pierre could find were on the last bench of the witnesses' compartment, against the partition which separated the latter from the space allotted to the standing public. Just as Guillaume was seating himself, he saw among the latter little Victor Mathis, who stood there with his elbows leaning on the partition, while his chin rested on his crossed hands. The young man's eyes were

glowing in his pale face with thin, compressed lips. Although they recognised one another, Victor did not move, and Guillaume on his side understood that it was not safe to exchange greetings in such a place. From that moment, however, he remained conscious that Victor was there, just above him, never stirring, but waiting silently, fiercely and with flaming eyes, for what was going to happen.

Pierre, meantime, had recognised that most amiable deputy Duthil, and little Princess Rosemonde, seated just in front of him. Amidst the hubbub of the throng which chatted and laughed to while away the time, their voices were the gayest to be heard, and plainly showed how delighted they were to find themselves at a spectacle to which so many desired admittance. Duthil was explaining all the arrangements to Rosemonde, telling her to whom or to what purpose each bench and wooden box was allotted: there was the jury-box, the prisoner's dock, the seats assigned to counsel for the defence, the public prosecutor, and the clerk of the court, without forgetting the table on which material evidence was deposited and the bar to which witnesses were summoned. There was nobody as yet in any of these places; one merely saw an attendant giving a last look round, and advocates passing rapidly. One might indeed have thought oneself in a theatre, the stage of which remained deserted, while the spectators crowded the auditorium waiting for the play to begin. To fill up the interval the little Princess ended by looking about her for persons of her acquaintance among the close-pressed crowd of sight-seers whose eager faces were already reddening.

"Oh! isn't that Monsieur Fonsègue over there behind the bench, near that stout lady in yellow?" she exclaimed. "Our friend General de Bozonnet is on the other side, I see. But isn't Baron Duvillard here?"

"Oh! no," replied Duthil; "he could hardly come; it would look as if he were here to ask for vengeance." Then, in his turn questioning Rosemonde, the deputy went on: "Do you happen to have quarrelled with your handsome friend Hyacinthe? Is that the reason why you've given me the pleasure of acting as your escort to-day?"

With a slight shrug of her shoulders, the Princess replied that poets were beginning to bore her. A fresh caprice, indeed, was drawing her into politics. For a week past she had found amusement in the surroundings of the ministerial crisis, into which the young deputy for Angoulême had initiated her. "They are all a little bit crazy at the Duvillards', my dear fellow," said she. "It's decided, you know, that Gérard is to marry Camille. The Baroness has resigned herself to it, and I've heard from a most reliable quarter that Madame de Quinsac, the young man's mother, has given her consent."

At this Duthil became quite merry. He also seemed to be well informed on the subject. "Yes, yes, I know," said he. "The wedding is to take place shortly, at the Madeleine. It will be a magnificent affair, no doubt. And after all, what would you have? There couldn't be a better finish to the affair. The Baroness is really kindness personified, and I said all along that she would sacrifice herself in order to ensure the hap-

piness of her daughter and Gérard. In point of fact that marriage will settle everything, put everything in proper order again."

"And what does the Baron say?" asked Rosemonde.

"The Baron? Why, he's delighted," replied Duthil in a bantering way. "You read no doubt this morning that Dauvergne is given the department of Public Instruction in the new Ministry. This means that Silviane's engagement at the Comédie is a certainty. Dauvergne was chosen simply on that account."

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by little Massot, who, after a dispute with one of the ushers some distance away, had perceived a vacant place by the side of the Princess. He thereupon made her a questioning sign, and she beckoned to him to approach.

"Ah!" said he, as he installed himself beside her, "I have not got here without trouble. One's crushed to death on the press bench, and I've an article to write. You are the kindest of women, Princess, to make a little room for your faithful admirer, myself." Then, after shaking hands with Duthil, he continued without any transition: "And so there's a new ministry at last, Monsieur le Député. You have all taken your time about it, but it's really a very fine ministry, which everybody regards with surprise and admiration."

The decrees appointing the new ministers had appeared in the "*Journal Officiel*" that very morning. After a long deadlock, after Vignon had for the second time seen his plans fail through ever-recurring obstacles, Monferrand, as a last resource, had suddenly been

summoned to the Élysée, and in four-and-twenty hours he had found the colleagues he wanted and secured the acceptance of his list, in such wise that he now triumphantly re-ascended to power after falling from it with Barroux in such wretched fashion. He had also chosen a new post for himself, relinquishing the department of the Interior for that of Finances, with the Presidency of the Council, which had long been his secret ambition. His stealthy labour, the masterly fashion in which he had saved himself while others sank, now appeared in its full beauty. First had come Salvat's arrest, and the use he had made of it, then the wonderful subterranean campaign which he had carried on against Vignon, the thousand obstacles which he had twice set across his path, and finally the sudden *dénouement* with that list he held in readiness, that formation of a ministry in a single day as soon as his services were solicited.

"It is fine work, I must compliment you on it," added little Massot by way of a jest.

"But I've had nothing to do with it," Duthil modestly replied.

"Nothing to do with it! Oh! yes you have, my dear sir, everybody says so."

The deputy felt flattered and smiled, while the other rattled on with his insinuations, which were put in such a humorous way that nothing he said could be resented. He talked of Monferrand's followers who had so powerfully helped him on to victory. How heartily had Fonsègue finished off his old friend Barroux in the "Globe"! Every morning for a month past the paper had published an article belabouring

Barroux, annihilating Vignon, and preparing the public for the return of a saviour of society who was not named. Then, too, Duvillard's millions had waged a secret warfare, all the Baron's numerous creatures had fought like an army for the good cause. Duthil himself had played the pipe and beaten the drum, while Chaigneux resigned himself to the baser duties which others would not undertake. And so the triumphant Monferrand would certainly begin by stifling that scandalous and embarrassing affair of the African Railways, and appointing a Committee of Inquiry to bury it.

By this time Duthil had assumed an important air. "Well, my dear fellow," said he, "at serious moments when society is in peril, certain strong-handed men, real men of government, become absolutely necessary. Monferrand had no need of our friendship, his presence in office was imperiously required by the situation. His hand is the only one that can save us!"

"I know," replied Massot scoffingly. "I've even been told that if everything was settled straight off so that the decrees might be published this morning, it was in order to instil confidence into the judges and jurymen here, in such wise that knowing Monferrand's fist to be behind them they would have the courage to pronounce sentence of death this evening."

"Well, public safety requires a sentence of death, and those who have to ensure that safety must not be left ignorant of the fact that the government is with them, and will know how to protect them, if need be."

At this moment a merry laugh from the Princess broke in upon the conversation. "Oh! just look over

there!" said she; "isn't that Silviane who has just sat down beside Monsieur Fonsèque?"

"The Silviane ministry!" muttered Massot in a jesting way. "Well, there will be no boredom at Dauvergne's if he ingratiates himself with actresses."

Guillaume and Pierre heard this chatter, however little they cared to listen to it. Such a deluge of society tittle-tattle and political indiscretion brought the former a keen heart-pang. So Salvat was sentenced to death even before he had appeared in court. He was to pay for the transgressions of one and all, his crime was simply a favourable opportunity for the triumph of a band of ambitious people bent on power and enjoyment! Ah! what terrible social rottenness there was in it all; money corrupting one and another, families sinking to filth, politics turned into a mere treacherous struggle between individuals, and power becoming the prey of the crafty and the impudent! Must not everything surely crumble? Was not this solemn assize of human justice a derisive parody, since all that one found there was an assembly of happy and privileged people defending the shaky edifice which sheltered them, and making use of all the forces they yet retained, to crush a fly — that unhappy devil of uncertain sanity who had been led to that court by his violent and cloudy dream of another, superior and avenging justice?

Such were Guillaume's thoughts, when all at once everybody around him started. Noon was now striking, and the jurymen trooped into court in straggling fashion and took their seats in their box. Among them one saw fat fellows clad in their Sunday best

and with the faces of simpletons, and thin fellows who had bright eyes and sly expressions. Some of them were bearded and some were bald. However, they all remained rather indistinct, as their side of the court was steeped in shade. After them came the judges, headed by M. de Larombière, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Appeal Court, who in assuming the perilous honour of conducting the trial had sought to increase the majesty of his long, slender, white face, which looked the more austere as both his assessors, one dark and the other fair, had highly coloured countenances. The public prosecutor's seat was already occupied by one of the most skilful of the advocates-general, M. Lehmann, a broad-shouldered Alsatian Israelite, with cunning eyes, whose presence showed that the case was deemed exceptionally important. At last, amidst the heavy tread of gendarmes, Salvat was brought in, at once rousing such ardent curiosity that all the spectators rose to look at him. He still wore the cap and loose overcoat procured for him by Victor Mathis, and everybody was surprised to see his emaciated, sorrowful, gentle face, crowned by scanty reddish hair, which was turning grey. His soft, glowing, dreamy blue eyes glanced around, and he smiled at someone whom he recognised, probably Victor, but perhaps Guillaume. After that he remained quite motionless.

The presiding judge waited for silence to fall, and then came the formalities which attend the opening of a court of law, followed by the perusal of the lengthy indictment, which a subordinate official read in a shrill voice. The scene had now changed, and the spectators

listened wearily and somewhat impatiently, as, for weeks past, the newspapers had related all that the indictment set forth. At present not a corner of the court remained unoccupied, there was scarcely space enough for the witnesses to stand in front of the bench. The closely packed throng was one of divers hues, the light gowns of ladies alternating with the black gowns of advocates, while the red robes of the judges disappeared from view, the bench being so low that the presiding judge's long face scarcely rose above the sea of heads. Many of those present became interested in the jurors, and strove to scrutinise their shadowy countenances. Others, who did not take their eyes off the prisoner, marvelled at his apparent weariness and indifference, which were so great that he scarcely answered the whispered questions of his counsel, a young advocate with a wideawake look, who was nervously awaiting the opportunity to achieve fame. Most curiosity, however, centred in the table set apart for the material evidence. Here were to be seen all sorts of fragments, some of the woodwork torn away from the carriage-door of the Duvillard mansion, some plaster that had fallen from the ceiling, a paving-stone which the violence of the explosion had split in halves, and other blackened remnants. The more moving sights, however, were the milliner's bonnet-box, which had remained uninjured, and a glass jar in which something white and vague was preserved in spirits of wine. This was one of the poor errand girl's little hands, which had been severed at the wrist. The authorities had been unable to place her poor ripped body on the table, and so they had brought that hand!

At last Salvat rose, and the presiding judge began to interrogate him. The contrast in the aspect of the court then acquired tragic force: in the shrouding shade upon one hand were the jurors, their minds already made up beneath the pressure of public terror, while in the full, vivid light on the other side was the prisoner, alone and woful, charged with all the crimes of his race. Four gendarmes watched over him. He was addressed by M. de Larombière in a tone of contempt and disgust. The judge was not deficient in rectitude; he was indeed one of the last representatives of the old, scrupulous, upright French magistracy; but he understood nothing of the new times, and he treated prisoners with the severity of a Biblical Jehovah. Moreover, the infirmity which was the worry of his life, the childish lisp which, in his opinion, had alone prevented him from shining as a public prosecutor, made him ferociously ill-tempered, incapable of any intelligent indulgence. There were smiles, which he divined, as soon as he raised his sharp, shrill little voice, to ask his first questions. That droll voice of his took away whatever majesty might have remained attached to these proceedings, in which a man's life was being fought for in a hall full of inquisitive, stifling and perspiring folks, who fanned themselves and jested. Salvat answered the judge's earlier questions with his wonted weariness and politeness. While the judge did everything to vilify him, harshly reproaching him with his wretched childhood and youth, magnifying every stain and every transgression in his career, referring to the promiscuity of his life between Madame Théodore and little Céline as

something bestial, he, the prisoner, quietly said yes or no, like a man who has nothing to hide and accepts the full responsibility of his actions. He had already made a complete confession of his crime, and he calmly repeated it without changing a word. He explained that if he had deposited his bomb at the entrance of the Duvillard mansion it was to give his deed its true significance, that of summoning the wealthy, the money-mongers who had so scandalously enriched themselves by dint of theft and falsehood, to restore that part of the common wealth which they had appropriated, to the poor, the working classes, their children and their wives, who perished of starvation. It was only at this moment that he grew excited; all the misery that he had endured or witnessed rose to his clouded, semi-educated brain, in which claims and theories and exasperated ideas of absolute justice and universal happiness had gathered confusedly. And from that moment he appeared such as he really was, a sentimentalist, a dreamer transported by suffering, proud and stubborn, and bent on changing the world in accordance with his sectarian logic.

"But you fled!" cried the judge in a voice such as would have befitted a grasshopper. "You must not say that you gave your life to your cause and were ready for martyrdom!"

Salvat's most poignant regret was that he had yielded in the Bois de Boulogne to the dismay and rage which come upon a tracked and hunted man and impel him to do all he can to escape capture. And on being thus taunted by the judge he became quite angry. "I don't fear death, you'll see that," he

replied. "If all had the same courage as I have, your rotten society would be swept away to-morrow, and happiness would at last dawn."

Then the interrogatory dealt at great length with the composition and manufacture of the bomb. The judge, rightly enough, pointed out that this was the only obscure point of the affair. "And so," he remarked, "you persist in saying that dynamite was the explosive you employed? Well, you will presently hear the experts, who, it is true, differ on certain points, but are all of opinion that you employed some other explosive, though they cannot say precisely what it was. Why not speak out on the point, as you glory in saying everything?"

Salvat, however, had suddenly calmed down, giving only cautious monosyllabic replies. "Well, seek for whatever you like if you don't believe me," he now answered. "I made my bomb by myself, and under circumstances which I've already related a score of times. You surely don't expect me to reveal names and compromise comrades?"

From this declaration he would not depart. It was only towards the end of the interrogatory that irresistible emotion overcame him on the judge again referring to the unhappy victim of his crime, the little errand girl, so pretty and fair and gentle, whom ferocious destiny had brought to the spot to meet such an awful death. "It was one of your own class whom you struck," said M. de Larombière; "your victim was a work girl, a poor child who, with the few pence she earned, helped to support her aged grandmother."

Salvat's voice became very husky as he answered:

"That's really the only thing I regret. . . . My bomb certainly wasn't meant for her; and may all the workers, all the starvelings, remember that she gave her blood as I'm going to give mine!"

In this wise the interrogatory ended amidst profound agitation. Pierre had felt Guillaume shuddering beside him, whilst the prisoner quietly and obstinately refused to say a word respecting the explosive that had been employed, preferring as he did to assume full responsibility for the deed which was about to cost him his life. Moreover, Guillaume, on turning round, in compliance with an irresistible impulse, had perceived Victor Mathis still motionless behind him: his elbows ever leaning on the rail of the partition, and his chin still resting on his hands, whilst he listened with silent, concentrated passion. His face had become yet paler than before, and his eyes glowed as with an avenging fire, whose flames would never more be extinguished.

The interrogatory of the prisoner was followed by a brief commotion in court.

"That Salvat looks quite nice, he has such soft eyes," declared the Princess, whom the proceedings greatly amused. "Oh! don't speak ill of him, my dear deputy. You know that I have Anarchist ideas myself."

"I speak no ill of him," gaily replied Duthil. "Nor has our friend Amadiou any right to speak ill of him. For you know that this affair has set Amadiou on a pinnacle. He was never before talked about to such an extent as he is now; and he delights in being talked about, you know! He has become quite a social celeb-

riety, the most illustrious of our investigating magistrates, and will soon be able to do or become whatever he pleases."

Then Massot, with his sarcastic impudence, summed up the situation. "When Anarchism flourishes, everything flourishes, eh? That bomb has helped on the affairs of a good many fine fellows that I know? Do you think that my governor Fonsèque, who's so attentive to Silviane yonder, complains of it? And doesn't Sagnier, who's spreading himself out behind the presiding judge, and whose proper place would be between the four gendarmes — doesn't he owe a debt to Salvat for all the abominable advertisements he has been able to give his paper by using the wretched fellow's back as a big drum? And I need not mention the politicians or the financiers or all those who fish in troubled waters."

"But I say," interrupted Duthil, "it seems to me that you yourself made good use of the affair. Your interview with the little girl Céline brought you in a pot of money."

Massot, as it happened, had been struck with the idea of ferreting out Madame Théodore and the child, and of relating his visit to them in the "Globe," with an abundance of curious and touching particulars. The article had met with prodigious success, Céline's pretty answers respecting her imprisoned father having such an effect on ladies with sensitive hearts that they had driven to Montmartre in their carriages in order to see the two poor creatures. Thus alms had come to them from all sides; and strangely enough the very people who demanded the father's

head were the most eager to sympathise with the child.

"Well, I don't complain of my little profits," said the journalist in answer to Duthil. "We all earn what we can, you know."

At this moment Rosemonde, while glancing round her, recognised Guillaume and Pierre, but she was so amazed to see the latter in ordinary civilian garb that she did not dare to speak to him. Leaning forward she acquainted Duthil and Massot with her surprise, and they both turned round to look. From motives of discretion, however, they pretended that they did not recognise the Froments.

The heat in court was now becoming quite unbearable, and one lady had already fainted. At last the presiding judge again raised his lisping voice, and managed to restore silence. Salvat, who had remained standing, now held a few sheets of paper, and with some difficulty he made the judge understand that he desired to complete his interrogatory by reading a declaration, which he had drawn up in prison, and in which he explained his reasons for his crime. For a moment M. de Larombière hesitated, all surprise and indignation at such a request; but he was aware that he could not legally impose silence on the prisoner, and so he signified his consent with a gesture of mingled irritation and disdain. Thereupon Salvat began his perusal much after the fashion of a schoolboy, hemming and hawing here and there, occasionally becoming confused, and then bringing out certain words with wonderful emphasis, which evidently pleased him. This declaration of his was the usual cry of

suffering and revolt already raised by so many disinherited ones. It referred to all the frightful want of the lower spheres; the toiler unable to find a livelihood in his toil; a whole class, the most numerous and worthy of the classes, dying of starvation; whilst, on the other hand, were the privileged ones, gorged with wealth, and wallowing in satiety, yet refusing to part with even the crumbs from their tables, determined as they were to restore nothing whatever of the wealth which they had stolen. And so it became necessary to take everything away from them, to rouse them from their egotism by terrible warnings, and to proclaim to them even with the crash of bombs that the day of justice had come. The unhappy man spoke that word "justice" in a ringing voice which seemed to fill the whole court. But the emotion of those who heard him reached its highest pitch when, after declaring that he laid down his life for the cause, and expected nothing but a verdict of death from the jury, he added, as if prophetically, that his blood would assuredly give birth to other martyrs. They might send him to the scaffold, said he, but he knew that his example would bear fruit. After him would come another avenger, and yet another, and others still, until the old and rotten social system should have crumbled away so as to make room for the society of justice and happiness of which he was one of the apostles.

The presiding judge, in his impatience and agitation, twice endeavoured to interrupt Salvat. But the other read on and on with the imperturbable conscientiousness of one who fears that he may not give proper utterance to his most important words. He must have

been thinking of that perusal ever since he had been in prison. It was the decisive act of his suicide, the act by which he proclaimed that he gave his life for the glory of dying in the cause of mankind. And when he had finished he sat down between the gendarmes with glowing eyes and flushed cheeks, as if he inwardly experienced some deep joy.

To destroy the effect which the declaration had produced — a commingling of fear and compassion — the judge at once wished to proceed with the hearing of the witnesses. Of these there was an interminable procession; though little interest attached to their evidence, for none of them had any revelations to make. Most attention perhaps was paid to the measured statements of Grandidier, who had been obliged to dismiss Salvat from his employ on account of the Anarchist propaganda he had carried on. Then the prisoner's brother-in-law, Toussaint, the mechanician, also seemed a very worthy fellow if one might judge him by the manner in which he strove to put things favourably for Salvat, without in any way departing from the truth. After Toussaint's evidence considerable time was taken up by the discussions between the experts, who disagreed in public as much as they had disagreed in their reports. Although they were all of opinion that dynamite could not have been the explosive employed in the bomb, they indulged in the most extraordinary and contradictory suppositions as to this explosive's real nature. Eventually a written opinion given by the illustrious *savant* Bertheroy was read; and this, after clearly setting forth the known facts, concluded that one found oneself in presence of

a new explosive of prodigious power, the formula of which he himself was unable to specify.

Then detective Mondésir and commissary Dupot came in turn to relate the various phases of the man hunt in the Bois de Boulogne. In Mondésir centred all the gaiety of the proceedings, thanks to the guard-room sallies with which he enlivened his narrative. And in like way the greatest grief, a perfect shudder of revolt and compassion, was roused by the errand girl's grandmother, a poor, bent, withered old woman, whom the prosecution had cruelly constrained to attend the court, and who wept and looked quite dismayed, unable as she was to understand what was wanted of her. When she had withdrawn, the only remaining witnesses were those for the defence, a procession of foremen and comrades, who all declared that they had known Salvat as a very worthy fellow, an intelligent and zealous workman, who did not drink, but was extremely fond of his daughter, and incapable of an act of dishonesty or cruelty.

It was already four o'clock when the evidence of the witnesses came to an end. The atmosphere in court was now quite stifling, feverish fatigue flushed every face, and a kind of ruddy dust obscured the waning light which fell from the windows. Women were fanning themselves and men were mopping their foreheads. However, the passion roused by the scene still brought a glow of cruel delight to every eye. And no one stirred.

"Ah!" sighed Rosemonde all at once, "to think that I hoped to drink a cup of tea at a friend's at five o'clock. I shall die of thirst and starvation here."

"We shall certainly be kept till seven," replied Massot. "I can't offer to go and fetch you a roll, for I shouldn't be readmitted."

Then Duthil, who had not ceased shrugging his shoulders while Salvat read his declaration, exclaimed: "What childish things he said, didn't he? And to think that the fool is going to die for all that! Rich and poor, indeed! Why, there will always be rich and poor. And it's equally certain that when a man is poor his one great desire is to become rich. If that fellow is in the dock to-day it's simply because he failed to make money."

While the others were thus conversing, Pierre for his part was feeling extremely anxious about his brother, who sat beside him in silence, pale and utterly upset. Pierre sought his hand and covertly pressed it. Then in a low voice he inquired: "Do you feel ill? Shall we go away?"

Guillaume answered him by discreetly and affectionately returning his handshake. He was all right, he would remain till the end, however much he might be stirred by exasperation.

It was now Monsieur Lehmann, the public prosecutor, who rose to address the court. He had a large, stern mouth, and was squarely built, with a stubborn Jewish face. Nevertheless he was known to be a man of dexterous, supple nature, one who had a foot in every political camp, and invariably contrived to be on good terms with the powers that were. This explained his rapid rise in life, and the constant favour he enjoyed. In the very first words he spoke he alluded to the new ministry gazetted that morn-

ing, referring pointedly to the strong-handed man who had undertaken the task of reassuring peaceable citizens and making evil-doers tremble. Then he fell upon the wretched Salvat with extraordinary vehemence, recounting the whole of his life, and exhibiting him as a bandit expressly born for the perpetration of crime, a monster who was bound to end by committing some abominable and cowardly outrage. Next he flagellated Anarchism and its partisans. The Anarchists were a mere herd of vagabonds and thieves, said he. That had been shown by the recent robbery at the Princess de Harn's house. The ignoble gang that had been arrested for that affair had given the apostles of the Anarchist doctrine as their references! And that was what the application of Anarchist theories resulted in — burglary and filth, pending a favourable hour for wholesale pillage and murder! For nearly a couple of hours the public prosecutor continued in this fashion, throwing truth and logic to the winds, and exclusively striving to alarm his hearers. He made all possible use of the terror which had reigned in Paris, and figuratively brandished the corpse of the poor little victim, the pretty errand girl, as if it were a blood-red flag, before pointing to the pale hand, preserved in spirits of wine, with a gesture of compassionate horror which sent a shudder through his audience. And he ended, as he had begun, by inspiring the jurors, and telling them that they might fearlessly do their duty now that those at the head of the State were firmly resolved to give no heed to threats.

Then the young advocate entrusted with the defence in his turn spoke. And he really said what there was

to say with great clearness and precision. He was of a different school from that of the public prosecutor: his eloquence was very simple and smooth, his only passion seemed to be zeal for truth. Moreover, it was sufficient for him to show Salvat's career in its proper light, to depict him pursued by social fatalities since his childhood, and to explain the final action of his career by all that he had suffered and all that had sprung up in his dreamy brain. Was not his crime the crime of one and all? Who was there that did not feel, if only in a small degree, responsible for that bomb which a penniless, starving workman had deposited on the threshold of a wealthy man's abode — a wealthy man whose name bespoke the injustice of the social system: so much enjoyment on the one hand and so much privation on the other! If one of us happened to lose his head, and felt impelled to hasten the advent of happiness by violence in such troublous times, when so many burning problems claimed solution, ought he to be deprived of his life in the name of justice, when none could swear that they had not in some measure contributed to his madness? Following up this question, Salvat's counsel dwelt at length on the period that witnessed the crime, a period of so many scandals and collapses, when the old world was giving birth to a new one amidst the most terrible struggles and pangs. And he concluded by begging the jury to show themselves humane, to resist all passion and terror, and to pacify the rival classes by a wise verdict, instead of prolonging social warfare by giving the starvelings yet another martyr to avenge.

It was past six o'clock when M. de Larombière

began to sum up in a partial and flowery fashion, in which one detected how grieved and angry he was at having such a shrill little voice. Then the judges and the jurors withdrew, and the prisoner was led away, leaving the spectators waiting amidst an uproar of feverish impatience. Some more ladies had fainted, and it had even been necessary to carry out a gentleman who had been overcome by the cruel heat. However, the others stubbornly remained there, not one of them quitting his place.

"Ah! it won't take long now," said Massot. "The jurors brought their verdict all ready in their pockets. I was looking at them while that little advocate was telling them such sensible things. They all looked as if they were comfortably asleep in the gloom."

Then Duthil turned to the Princess and asked her, "Are you still hungry?"

"Oh! I'm starving," she replied. "I shall never be able to wait till I get home. You will have to take me to eat a biscuit somewhere. . . . All the same, however, it's very exciting to see a man's life staked on a yes or a no."

Meantime Pierre, finding Guillaume still more feverish and grieved, had once again taken hold of his hand. Neither of them spoke, so great was the distress that they experienced for many reasons which they themselves could not have precisely defined. It seemed to them, however, that all human misery—inclusive of their own, the affections, the hopes, the griefs which brought them suffering—was sobbing and quivering in that buzzing hall. Twilight had gradually fallen there, but as the end was now so

near it had doubtless been thought unnecessary to light the chandeliers. And thus large vague shadows, dimming and shrouding the serried throng, now hovered about in the last gleams of the day. The ladies in light gowns yonder, behind the bench, looked like pale phantoms with all-devouring eyes, whilst the numerous groups of black-robed advocates formed large sombre patches which gradually spread everywhere. The greyish painting of the Christ had already vanished, and on the walls one only saw the glaring white bust of the Republic, which resembled some frigid death's head starting forth from the darkness.

"Ah!" Massot once more exclaimed, "I knew that it wouldn't take long!"

Indeed, the jurors were returning after less than a quarter of an hour's absence. Then the judges likewise came back and took their seats. Increased emotion stirred the throng, a great gust seemed to sweep through the court, a gust of anxiety, which made every head sway. Some people had risen to their feet, and others gave vent to involuntary exclamations. The foreman of the jury, a gentleman with a broad red face, had to wait a moment before speaking. At last in a sharp but somewhat sputtering voice he declared: "On my honour and my conscience, before God and before man, the verdict of the jury is: on the question of Murder, yes, by a majority of votes."¹

The night had almost completely fallen when Sal-

¹ English readers may be reminded that in France the verdict of a majority of the jury suffices for conviction or acquittal. If the jury is evenly divided the prisoner is acquitted. — *Trans.*

vat was once more brought in. In front of the jurors, who faded away in the gloom, he stood forth, erect, with a last ray from the windows lighting up his face. The judges themselves almost disappeared from view, their red robes seemed to have turned black. And how phantom-like looked the prisoner's emaciated face as he stood there listening, with dreamy eyes, while the clerk of the court read the verdict to him.

When silence fell and no mention was made of extenuating circumstances, he understood everything. His face, which had retained a childish expression, suddenly brightened. "That means death. Thank you, gentlemen," he said.

Then he turned towards the public, and amidst the growing darkness searched for the friendly faces which he knew were there; and this time Guillaume became fully conscious that he had recognised him, and was again expressing affectionate and grateful thanks for the crust he had received from him on a day of want. He must have also bidden farewell to Victor Mathis, for as Guillaume glanced at the young man, who had not moved, he saw that his eyes were staring wildly, and that a terrible expression rested on his lips.

As for the rest of the proceedings, the last questions addressed to the jury and the counsel, the deliberations of the judges and the delivery of sentence—these were all lost amidst the buzzing and surging of the crowd. A little compassion was unconsciously manifested; and some stupor was mingled with the satisfaction that greeted the sentence of death.

No sooner had Salvat been condemned, however,

than he drew himself up to his full height, and as the guards led him away he shouted in a stentorian voice: "Long live Anarchy!"

Nobody seemed angered by the cry. The crowd went off quietly, as if weariness had lulled all its passions. The proceedings had really lasted too long and fatigued one too much. It was quite pleasant to inhale the fresh air on emerging from such a nightmare.

In the large waiting hall, Pierre and Guillaume passed Duthil and the Princess, whom General de Bozonnet had stopped while chatting with Fonsègue. All four of them were talking in very loud voices, complaining of the heat and their hunger, and agreeing that the affair had not been a particularly interesting one. Yet, all was well that ended well. As Fonsègue remarked, the condemnation of Salvat to death was a political and social necessity.

When Pierre and Guillaume reached the Pont Neuf, the latter for a moment rested his elbows on the parapet of the bridge. His brother, standing beside him, also gazed at the grey waters of the Seine, which here and there were fired by the reflections of the gas lamps. A fresh breeze ascended from the river; it was the delightful hour when night steals gently over resting Paris. Then, as the brothers stood there breathing that atmosphere which usually brings relief and comfort, Pierre on his side again became conscious of his heart-wound, and remembered his promise to return to Montmartre, a promise that he must keep in spite of the torture there awaiting him; whilst Guillaume on the other hand experienced a revival of the suspicion and inquietude that had come to him on seeing

Marie so feverish, changed as it were by some new feeling, of which she herself was ignorant. Were further sufferings, struggles, and obstacles to happiness yet in store for those brothers who loved one another so dearly? At all events their hearts bled once more with all the sorrow into which they had been cast by the scene they had just witnessed: that assize of justice at which a wretched man had been condemned to pay with his head for the crimes of one and all.

Then, as they turned along the quay, Guillaume recognised young Victor going off alone in the gloom, just in front of them. The chemist stopped him and spoke to him of his mother. But the young man did not hear; his thin lips parted, and in a voice as trenchant as a knife-thrust he exclaimed: "Ah! so it's blood they want. Well, they may cut off his head, but he will be avenged!"

V

SACRIFICE

THE days which followed Salvat's trial seemed gloomy ones up yonder in Guillaume's workroom, which was usually so bright and gay. Sadness and silence filled the place. The three young men were no longer there. Thomas betook himself to the Granddier works early every morning in order to perfect his little motor; François was so busy preparing for his examination that he scarcely left the École Normale; while Antoine was doing some work at Jahan's, where he delighted to linger and watch his little friend Lise awakening to life. Thus Guillaume's sole companion was Mère-Grand, who sat near the window busy with her needlework; for Marie was ever going about the house, and only stayed in the workroom for any length of time when Pierre happened to be there.

Guillaume's gloom was generally attributed to the feelings of anger and revolt into which the condemnation of Salvat had thrown him. He had flown into a passion on his return from the Palace of Justice, declaring that the execution of the unhappy man would simply be social murder, deliberate provocation of class warfare. And the others had bowed on hearing that pain-fraught violent cry, without attempting to discuss the point. Guillaume's sons respectfully

left him to the thoughts which kept him silent for hours, with his face pale and a dreamy expression in his eyes. His chemical furnace remained unlighted, and his only occupation from morn till night was to examine the plans and documents connected with his invention, that new explosive and that terrible engine of war, which he had so long dreamt of presenting to France in order that she might impose the reign of truth and justice upon all the nations. However, during the long hours which he spent before the papers scattered over his table, often without seeing them, for his eyes wandered far away, a multitude of vague thoughts came to him — doubts respecting the wisdom of his project, and fears lest his desire to pacify the nations should simply throw them into an endless war of extermination. Although he really believed that great city of Paris to be the world's brain, entrusted with the task of preparing the future, he could not disguise from himself that with all its folly and shame and injustice it still presented a shocking spectacle. Was it really ripe enough for the work of human salvation which he thought of entrusting to it? Then, on trying to re-peruse his notes and verify his formulas, he only recovered his former energetic determination on thinking of his marriage, whereupon the idea came to him that it was now too late for him to upset his life by changing such long-settled plans.

His marriage! Was it not the thought of this which haunted Guillaume and disturbed him far more powerfully than his scientific work or his humanitarian passion? Beneath all the worries that he acknow-

ledged, there was another which he did not confess even to himself, and which filled him with anguish. He repeated day by day that he would reveal his invention to the Minister of War as soon as he should be married to Marie, whom he wished to associate with his glory. Married to Marie! Each time he thought of it, burning fever and secret disquietude came over him. If he now remained so silent and had lost his quiet cheerfulness, it was because he had felt new life, as it were, emanating from her. She was certainly no longer the same woman as formerly; she was becoming more and more changed and distant. He had watched her and Pierre when the latter happened to be there, which was now but seldom. He, too, appeared embarrassed, and different from what he had been. On the days when he came, however, Marie seemed transformed; it was as if new life animated the house. Certainly the intercourse between her and Pierre was quite innocent, sisterly on the one hand, brotherly on the other. They simply seemed to be a pair of good friends. And yet a radiance, a vibration, emanated from them, something more subtle even than a sun-ray or a perfume. After the lapse of a few days Guillaume found himself unable to doubt the truth any longer. And his heart bled, he was utterly upset by it. He had not found them in fault in any way, but he was convinced that these two children, as he so paternally called them, really adored one another.

One lovely morning when he happened to be alone with Mère-Grand, face to face with sunlit Paris, he fell into a yet more dolorous reverie than usual. He

seemed to be gazing fixedly at the old lady, as, seated in her usual place, she continued sewing with an air of queenly serenity. Perhaps, however, he did not see her. For her part she occasionally raised her eyes and glanced at him, as if expecting a confession which did not come. At last, finding such silence unbearable, she made up her mind to address him: "What has been the matter with you, Guillaume, for some time past? Why don't you tell me what you have to tell me?"

He descended from the clouds, as it were, and answered in astonishment: "What I have to tell you?"

"Yes, I know it as well as you do, and I thought you would speak to me of it, since it pleases you to do nothing here without consulting me."

At this he turned very pale and shuddered. So he had not been mistaken in the matter, even Mère-Grand knew all about it. To talk of it, however, was to give shape to his suspicions, to transform what, hitherto, might merely have been a fancy on his part into something real and definite.

"It was inevitable, my dear son," said Mère-Grand. "I foresaw it from the outset. And if I did not warn you of it, it was because I believed in some deep design on your part. Since I have seen you suffering, however, I have realised that I was mistaken." Then, as he still looked at her quivering and distracted, she continued: "Yes, I fancied that you might have wished it, that in bringing your brother here you wished to know if Marie loved you otherwise than as a father. There was good reason for testing her—

for instance, the great difference between your ages, for your life is drawing to a close, whilst hers is only beginning. And I need not mention the question of your work, the mission which I have always dreamt of for you."

Thereupon, with his hands raised in prayerful fashion, Guillaume drew near to the old lady and exclaimed: "Oh! speak out clearly, tell me what you think. I don't understand, my poor heart is so lacerated; and yet I should so much like to know everything, so as to be able to act and take a decision. To think that you whom I love, you whom I venerate as much as if you were my real mother, you whose profound good sense I know so well that I have always followed your advice—to think that you should have foreseen this frightful thing and have allowed it to happen at the risk of its killing me! . . . Why have you done so, tell me, why?"

Mère-Grand was not fond of talking. Absolute mistress of the house as she was, managing everything, accountable to nobody for her actions, she never gave expression to all that she thought or all that she desired. Indeed, there was no occasion for it, as Guillaume, like the children, relied upon her completely, with full confidence in her wisdom. And her somewhat enigmatical ways even helped to raise her in their estimation.

"What is the use of words, when things themselves speak?" she now gently answered, while still plying her needle. "It is quite true that I approved of the plan of a marriage between you and Marie, for I saw that it was necessary that she should be married if

she was to stay here. And then, too, there were many other reasons which I needn't speak of. However, Pierre's arrival here has changed everything, and placed things in their natural order. Is not that preferable?"

He still lacked the courage to understand her. "Preferable! When I'm in agony? When my life is wrecked?"

Thereupon she rose and came to him, tall and rigid in her thin black gown, and with an expression of austerity and energy on her pale face. "My son," she said, "you know that I love you, and that I wish you to be very noble and lofty. Only the other morning, you had an attack of fright, the house narrowly escaped being blown up. Then, for some days now you have been sitting over those documents and plans in an absent-minded, distracted state, like a man who feels weak, and doubts, and no longer knows his way. Believe me, you are following a dangerous path; it is better that Pierre should marry Marie, both for their sakes and for your own."

"For my sake? No, no! What will become of me!"

"You will calm yourself and reflect, my son. You have such serious duties before you. You are on the eve of making your invention known. It seems to me that something has bedimmed your sight, and that you will perhaps act wrongly in this respect, through failing to take due account of the problem before you. Perhaps there is something better to be done. . . . At all events, suffer if it be necessary, but remain faithful to your ideal."

Then, quitting him with a maternal smile, she sought to soften her somewhat stern words by adding: "You have compelled me to speak unnecessarily, for I am quite at ease; with your superior mind, whatever be in question, you can but do the one right thing that none other would do."

On finding himself alone Guillaume fell into feverish uncertainty. What was the meaning of Mère-Grand's enigmatical words? He knew that she was on the side of whatever might be good, natural, and necessary. But she seemed to be urging him to some lofty heroism; and indeed what she had said threw a ray of light upon the unrest which had come to him in connection with his old plan of going to confide his secret to some Minister of War or other, whatever one might happen to be in office at the time. Growing hesitation and repugnance stirred him as he fancied he could again hear her saying that perhaps there might be some better course, that would require search and reflection. But all at once a vision of Marie rose before him, and his heart was rent by the thought that he was asked to renounce her. To lose her, to give her to another! No, no, that was beyond his strength. He would never have the frightful courage that was needed to pass by the last promised raptures of love with disdain!

For a couple of days Guillaume struggled on. He seemed to be again living the six years which the young woman had already spent beside him in that happy little house. She had been at first like an adopted daughter there; and later on, when the idea of their marriage had sprung up, he had viewed it

with quiet delight in the hope that it would ensure the happiness of all around him. If he had previously abstained from marrying again it was from the fear of placing a strange mother over his children; and if he yielded to the charm of loving yet once more, and no longer leading a solitary life, it was because he had found at his very hearth one of such sensible views, who, in the flower of youth, was willing to become his wife despite the difference in their ages. Then months had gone by, and serious occurrences had compelled them to postpone the wedding, though without undue suffering on his part. Indeed, the certainty that she was waiting for him had sufficed him, for his life of hard work had rendered him patient. Now, however, all at once, at the threat of losing her, his hitherto tranquil heart ached and bled. He would never have thought the tie so close a one. But he was now almost fifty, and it was as if love and woman were being wrenched away from him, the last woman that he could love and desire, one too who was the more desirable, as she was the incarnation of youth from which he must ever be severed, should he indeed lose her. Passionate desire, mingled with rage, flared up within him at the thought that someone should have come to take her from him.

One night, alone in his room, he suffered perfect martyrdom. In order that he might not rouse the house he buried his face in his pillow so as to stifle his sobs. After all, it was a simple matter; Marie had given him her promise, and he would compel her to keep it. She would be his, and his alone, and none

would be able to steal her from him. Then, however, there rose before him a vision of his brother, the long-forgotten one, whom, from feelings of affection, he had compelled to join his family. But his sufferings were now so acute that he would have driven that brother away had he been before him. He was enraged, maddened, by the thought of him. His brother — his little brother! So all their love was over; hatred and violence were about to poison their lives. For hours Guillaume continued complaining deliriously, and seeking how he might so rid himself of Pierre that what had happened should be blotted out. Now and again, when he recovered self-control, he marvelled at the tempest within him; for was he not a *savant* guided by lofty reason, a toiler to whom long experience had brought serenity? But the truth was that this tempest had not sprung up in his mind, it was raging in the child-like soul that he had retained, the nook of affection and dreaminess which remained within him side by side with his principles of pitiless logic and his belief in proven phenomena only. His very genius came from the duality of his nature: behind the chemist was a social dreamer, hungering for justice and capable of the greatest love. And now passion was transporting him, and he was weeping for the loss of Marie as he would have wept over the downfall of that dream of his, the destruction of war by war, that scheme for the salvation of mankind at which he had been working for ten years past.

At last, amidst his weariness, a sudden resolution calmed him. He began to feel ashamed of despairing in this wise when he had no certain grounds to go

upon. He must know everything, he would question the young woman; she was loyal enough to answer him frankly. Was not this a solution worthy of them both? An explanation in all sincerity, after which they would be able to take a decision. Then he fell asleep; and, tired though he felt when he rose in the morning, he was calmer. It was as if some secret work had gone on in his heart during his few hours of repose after that terrible storm.

As it happened Marie was very gay that morning. On the previous day she had gone with Pierre and Antoine on a cycling excursion over frightful roads in the direction of Montmorency, whence they had returned in a state of mingled anger and delight. When Guillaume stopped her in the little garden, he found her humming a song while returning bare-armed from the scullery, where some washing was going on.

"Do you want to speak to me?" she asked.

"Yes, my dear child, it's necessary for us to talk of some serious matters."

She at once understood that their marriage was in question, and became grave. She had formerly consented to that marriage because she regarded it as the only sensible course she could take, and this with full knowledge of the duties which she would assume. No doubt her husband would be some twenty years older than herself, but this circumstance was one of somewhat frequent occurrence, and as a rule such marriages turned out well, rather than otherwise. Moreover, she was in love with nobody, and was free to consent. And she had consented with an impulse of gratitude and affection which seemed so sweet that

she thought it the sweetness of love itself. Everybody around her, too, appeared so pleased at the prospect of this marriage, which would draw the family yet more closely together. And, on her side, she had been as it were intoxicated by the idea of making others happy.

"What is the matter?" she now asked Guillaume in a somewhat anxious voice. "No bad news, I hope?"

"No, no," he answered. "I've simply something to say to you."

Then he led her under the plum-trees to the only green nook left in the garden. An old worm-eaten bench still stood there against the lilac-bushes. And in front of them Paris spread out its sea of roofs, looking light and fresh in the morning sunlight.

They both sat down. But at the moment of speaking and questioning Marie, Guillaume experienced sudden embarrassment, while his heart beat violently at seeing her beside him, so young and adorable with her bare arms.

"Our wedding-day is drawing near," he ended by saying. And then as she turned somewhat pale, perhaps unconsciously, he himself suddenly felt cold. Had not her lips twitched as if with pain? Had not a shadow passed over her fresh, clear eyes?

"Oh! we still have some time before us," she replied.

Then, slowly and very affectionately, he resumed: "No doubt; still it is necessary to attend to the formalities. And it is as well, perhaps, that I should speak of those worries to-day, so that I may not have to bother you about them again."

Then he gently went on telling her all that would have to be done, keeping his eyes on her whilst he spoke, watching for such signs of emotion as the thought of her promise's early fulfilment might bring to her face. She sat there in silence, with her hands on her lap, and her features quite still, thus giving no certain sign of any regret or trouble. Still she seemed rather dejected, compliant, as it were, but in no wise joyous.

"You say nothing, my dear Marie," Guillaume at last exclaimed. "Does anything of all this displease you?"

"Displease me? Oh, no!"

"You must speak out frankly, if it does, you know. We will wait a little longer if you have any personal reasons for wishing to postpone the date again."

"But I've no reasons, my friend. What reasons could I have? I leave you quite free to settle everything as you yourself may desire."

Silence fell. While answering, she had looked him frankly in the face; but a little quiver stirred her lips, and gloom, for which she could not account, seemed to rise and darken her face, usually as bright and gay as spring water. In former times would she not have laughed and sung at the mere announcement of that coming wedding?

Then Guillaume, with an effort which made his voice tremble, dared to speak out: "You must forgive me for asking you a question, my dear Marie. There is still time for you to cancel your promise. Are you quite certain that you love me?"

At this she looked at him in genuine stupefaction,

utterly failing to understand what he could be aiming at. And—as she seemed to be deferring her reply, he added: “Consult your heart. Is it really your old friend or is it another that you love?”

“I? I, Guillaume? Why do you say that to me? What can I have done to give you occasion to say such a thing!”

All her frank nature revolted as she spoke, and her beautiful eyes, glowing with sincerity, gazed fixedly on his.

“I love Pierre! I do, I? . . . Well, yes, I love him, as I love you all; I love him because he has become one of us, because he shares our life and our joys! I’m happy when he’s here, certainly; and I should like him to be always here. I’m always pleased to see him and hear him and go out with him. I was very much grieved recently when he seemed to be relapsing into his gloomy ideas. But all that is natural, is it not? And I think that I have only done what you desired I should do, and I cannot understand how my affection for Pierre can in any way exercise an influence respecting our marriage.”

These words, in her estimation, ought to have convinced Guillaume that she was not in love with his brother; but in lieu thereof they brought him painful enlightenment by the very ardour with which she denied the love imputed to her.

“But you unfortunate girl!” he cried. “You are betraying yourself without knowing it. . . . It is quite certain you do not love me, you love my brother!”

He had caught hold of her wrists and was pressing them with despairing affection as if to compel her to

read her heart. And she continued struggling. A most loving and tragic contest went on between them, he seeking to convince her by the evidence of facts, and she resisting him, stubbornly refusing to open her eyes. In vain did he recount what had happened since the first day, explaining the feelings which had followed one upon another in her heart and mind: first covert hostility, next curiosity regarding that extraordinary young priest, and then sympathy and affection when she had found him so wretched and had gradually cured him of his sufferings. They were both young and mother Nature had done the rest. However, at each fresh proof and certainty which he put before her, Marie only experienced growing emotion, trembling at last from head to foot, but still unwilling to question herself.

"No, no," said she, "I do not love him. If I loved him I should know it and would acknowledge it to you; for you are well aware that I cannot tell an untruth."

Guillaume, however, had the cruelty to insist on the point, like some heroic surgeon cutting into his own flesh even more than into that of others, in order that the truth might appear and everyone be saved. "Marie," said he, "it is not I whom you love. All that you feel for me is respect and gratitude and daughterly affection. Remember what your feelings were at the time when our marriage was decided upon. You were then in love with nobody, and you accepted the offer like a sensible girl, feeling certain that I should render you happy, and that the union was a right and satisfactory one. . . . But since then my brother has come here; love has sprung up in your

heart in quite a natural way ; and it is Pierre, Pierre alone, whom you love as a lover and a husband should be loved."

Exhausted though she was, utterly distracted, too, by the light which, despite herself, was dawning within her, Marie still stubbornly and desperately protested.

"But why do you struggle like this against the truth, my child?" said Guillaume; "I do not reproach you. It was I who chose that this should happen, like the old madman I am. What was bound to come has come, and doubtless it is for the best. I only wanted to learn the truth from you in order that I might take a decision and act uprightly."

These words vanquished her, and her tears gushed forth. It seemed as though something had been rent asunder within her; and she felt quite overcome, as if by the weight of a new truth of which she had hitherto been ignorant. "Ah! it was cruel of you," she said, "to do me such violence so as to make me read my heart. I swear to you again that I did not know I loved Pierre in the way you say. But you have opened my heart, and roused what was quietly slumbering in it. . . . And it is true, I do love Pierre, I love him now as you have said. And so here we are, all three of us supremely wretched through your doing!"

She sobbed, and with a sudden feeling of modesty freed her wrists from his grasp. He noticed, however, that no blush rose to her face. Truth to tell, her virginal loyalty was not in question; she had no cause to reproach herself with any betrayal; it was he alone, perforce, who had awakened her to love. For a mo-

ment they looked at one another through their tears: she so strong and healthy, her bosom heaving at each heart-beat, and her white arms — arms that could both charm and sustain — bare almost to her shoulders; and he still vigorous, with his thick fleece of white hair and his black moustaches, which gave his countenance such an expression of energetic youth. But it was all over, the irreparable had swept by, and utterly changed their lives.

“Marie,” he nobly said, “you do not love me, I give you back your promise.”

But with equal nobility she refused to take it back. “Never will I do so,” she replied. “I gave it to you frankly, freely and joyfully, and my affection and admiration for you have never changed.”

Nevertheless, with more firmness in his hitherto broken voice, Guillaume retorted: “You love Pierre, and it is Pierre whom you ought to marry.”

“No,” she again insisted, “I belong to you. A tie which years have tightened cannot be undone in an hour. Once again, if I love Pierre I swear to you that I was ignorant of it this morning. And let us leave the matter as it is; do not torture me any more, it would be too cruel of you.”

Then, quivering like a woman who suddenly perceives that she is bare, in a stranger’s presence, she hastily pulled down her sleeves, and even drew them over her hands as if to leave naught of her person visible. And afterwards she rose and walked away without adding a single word.

Guillaume remained alone on the bench in that leafy corner, in front of Paris, to which the light

morning sunshine lent the aspect of some quivering, soaring city of dreamland. A great weight oppressed him, and it seemed to him as if he would never be able to rise from the seat. That which brought him most suffering was Marie's assurance that she had till that morning been ignorant of the fact that she was in love with Pierre. She had been ignorant of it, and it was he, Guillaume, who had brought it to her knowledge, compelled her to confess it! He had now firmly planted it in her heart, and perhaps increased it by revealing it to her. Ah! how cruel the thought—to be the artisan of one's own torment! Of one thing he was now quite certain: there would be no more love in his life. At the idea of this, his poor, loving heart sank and bled. And yet amidst the disaster, amidst his grief at realising that he was an old man, and that renunciation was imperative, he experienced a bitter joy at having brought the truth to light. This was very harsh consolation, fit only for one of heroic soul, yet he found lofty satisfaction in it, and from that moment the thought of sacrifice imposed itself upon him with extraordinary force. He must marry his children; there lay the path of duty, the only wise and just course, the only certain means of ensuring the happiness of the household. And when his revolting heart yet leapt and shrieked with anguish, he carried his vigorous hands to his chest in order to still it.

On the morrow came the supreme explanation between Guillaume and Pierre, not in the little garden, however, but in the spacious workroom. And here again one beheld the vast panorama of Paris, a nation as it were at work, a huge vat in which the wine of

the future was fermenting. Guillaume had arranged things so that he might be alone with his brother; and no sooner had the latter entered than he attacked him, going straight to the point without any of the precautions which he had previously taken with Marie.

"Haven't you something to say to me, Pierre?" he inquired. "Why won't you confide in me?"

The other immediately understood him, and began to tremble, unable to find a word, but confessing everything by the distracted, entreating expression of his face.

"You love Marie," continued Guillaume, "why did you not loyally come and tell me of your love?"

At this Pierre recovered self-possession and defended himself vehemently: "I love Marie, it's true, and I felt that I could not conceal it, that you yourself would notice it at last. But there was no occasion for me to tell you of it, for I was sure of myself, and would have fled rather than have allowed a single word to cross my lips. I suffered in silence and alone, and you cannot know how great my torture was! It is even cruel on your part to speak to me of it; for now I am absolutely compelled to leave you. . . . I have already, on several occasions, thought of doing so. If I have come back here, it was doubtless through weakness, but also on account of my affection for you all. And what mattered my presence here? Marie ran no risk. She does not love me."

"She does love you!" Guillaume answered. "I questioned her yesterday, and she had to confess that she loved you."

At this Pierre, utterly distracted, caught Guillaume by the shoulders and gazed into his eyes. "Oh! brother, brother! what is this you say? Why say a thing which would mean terrible misfortune for us all? Even if it were true, my grief would far exceed my joy, for I will not have you suffer. Marie belongs to you. To me she is as sacred as a sister. And if there be only my madness to part you, it will pass by, I shall know how to conquer it."

"Marie loves you," repeated Guillaume in his gentle, obstinate way. "I don't reproach you with anything. I well know that you have struggled, and have never betrayed yourself to her either by word or glance. Yesterday she herself was still ignorant that she loved you, and I had to open her eyes. . . . What would you have? I simply state a fact: she loves you."

This time Pierre, still quivering, made a gesture of mingled rapture and terror, as if some divine and long-desired blessing were falling upon him from heaven and crushing him beneath its weight.

"Well, then," he said, after a brief pause, "it is all over. . . . Let us kiss one another for the last time, and then I'll go."

"Go? Why? You must stay with us. Nothing could be more simple: you love Marie and she loves you. I give her to you."

A loud cry came from Pierre, who wildly raised his hands again with a gesture of fright and rapture. "You give me Marie?" he replied. "You, who adore her, who have been waiting for her for months? No, no, it would overcome me, it would terrify me, as if you gave me your very heart after tearing it

from your breast. No, no! I will not accept your sacrifice!"

"But as it is only gratitude and affection that Marie feels for me," said Guillaume, "as it is you whom she really loves, am I to take a mean advantage of the engagements which she entered into unconsciously, and force her to a marriage when I know that she would never be wholly mine? Besides, I have made a mistake, it isn't I who give her to you, she has already given herself, and I do not consider that I have any right to prevent her from doing so."

"No, no! I will never accept, I will never bring such grief upon you. . . . Kiss me, brother, and let me go."

Thereupon Guillaume caught hold of Pierre and compelled him to sit down by his side on an old sofa near the window. And he began to scold him almost angrily while still retaining a smile, in which suffering and kindness were blended. "Come," said he, "we are surely not going to fight over it. You won't force me to tie you up so as to keep you here? I know what I'm about. I thought it all over before I spoke to you. No doubt, I can't tell you that it gladdens me. I thought at first that I was going to die; I should have liked to hide myself in the very depths of the earth. And then, well, it was necessary to be reasonable, and I understood that things had arranged themselves for the best, in their natural order."

Pierre, unable to resist any further, had begun to weep with both hands raised to his face.

"Don't grieve, brother, either for yourself or for me," said Guillaume. "Do you remember the happy

days we lately spent together at Neuilly after we had found one another again? All our old affection revived within us, and we remained for hours, hand in hand, recalling the past and loving one another. And what a terrible confession you made to me one night, the confession of your loss of faith, your torture, the void in which you were rolling! When I heard of it my one great wish was to cure you. I advised you to work, love, and believe in life, convinced as I was that life alone could restore you to peace and health. . . . And for that reason I afterwards brought you here. You fought against it, and it was I who forced you to come. I was so happy when I found that you again took an interest in life, and had once more become a man and a worker! I would have given some of my blood if necessary to complete your cure. . . . Well, it's done now, I have given you all I had, since Marie herself has become necessary to you, and she alone can save you."

Then as Pierre again attempted to protest, he resumed: "Don't deny it. It is so true indeed, that if she does not complete the work I have begun, all my efforts will have been vain, you will fall back into your misery and negation, into all the torments of a spoilt life. She is necessary to you, I say. And do you think that I no longer know how to love you? Would you have me refuse you the very breath of life that will truly make you a man, after all my fervent wishes for your return to life? I have enough affection for you both to consent to your loving one another. . . . Besides, I repeat it, nature knows what she does. Instinct is a sure guide, it always

tends to what is useful and true. I should have been a sorry husband, and it is best that I should keep to my work as an old *savant*; whereas you are young and represent the future, all fruitful and happy life."

Pierre shuddered as he heard this, for his old fears returned to him. Had not the priesthood for ever cut him off from life, had not his long years of chaste celibacy robbed him of his manhood? "Fruitful and happy life!" he muttered, "ah! if you only knew how distressed I feel at the idea that I do not perhaps deserve the gift you so lovingly offer me! You are worth more than I am; you would have given her a larger heart, a firmer brain, and perhaps, too, you are really a younger man than myself. . . . There is still time, brother, keep her, if with you she is likely to be happier and more truly and completely loved. For my part I am full of doubts. Her happiness is the only thing of consequence. Let her belong to the one who will love her best!"

Indescribable emotion had now come over both men. As Guillaume heard his brother's broken words, the cry of a love that trembled at the thought of possible weakness, he did for a moment waver. With a dreadful heart-pang he stammered despairingly: "Ah! Marie, whom I love so much! Marie, whom I would have rendered so happy!"

At this Pierre could not restrain himself; he rose and cried: "Ah! you see that you love her still and cannot renounce her. . . . So let me go! let me go!"

But Guillaume had already caught him around the body, clasping him with an intensity of brotherly love which was increased by the renunciation he was re-

solved upon: "Stay!" said he. "It wasn't I that spoke, it was the other man that was in me, he who is about to die, who is already dead! By the memory of our mother and our father I swear to you that the sacrifice is consummated, and that if you two refuse to accept happiness from me you will but make me suffer."

For a moment the weeping men remained in one another's arms. They had often embraced before, but never had their hearts met and mingled as they did now. It was a delightful moment, which seemed an eternity. All the grief and misery of the world had disappeared from before them; there remained naught save their glowing love, whence sprang an eternity of love even as light comes from the sun. And that moment was compensation for all their past and future tears, whilst yonder, on the horizon before them, Paris still spread and rumbled, ever preparing the unknown future.

Just then Marie herself came in. And the rest proved very simple. Guillaume freed himself from his brother's clasp, led him forward and compelled him and Marie to take each other by the hand. At first she made yet another gesture of refusal in her stubborn resolve that she would not take her promise back. But what could she say face to face with those two tearful men, whom she had found in one another's arms, mingling together in such close brotherliness? Did not those tears and that embrace sweep away all ordinary reasons, all such arguments as she held in reserve? Even the embarrassment of the situation disappeared, it seemed as if she had already had a

long explanation with Pierre, and that he and she were of one mind to accept that gift of love which Guillaume offered them with so much heroism. A gust of the sublime passed through the room, and nothing could have appeared more natural to them than this extraordinary scene. Nevertheless, Marie remained silent, she dared not give her answer, but looked at them both with her big soft eyes, which, like their own, were full of tears.

And it was Guillaume who, with sudden inspiration, ran to the little staircase conducting to the rooms overhead, and called: "Mère-Grand! Mère-Grand! Come down at once, you are wanted."

Then, as soon as she was there, looking slim and pale in her black gown, and showing the wise air of a queen-mother whom all obeyed, he said: "Tell these two children that they can do nothing better than marry one another. Tell them that we have talked it over, you and I, and that it is your desire, your will that they should do so."

She quietly nodded her assent, and then said: "That is true, it will be by far the most sensible course."

Thereupon Marie flung herself into her arms, consenting, yielding to the superior forces, the powers of life, that had thus changed the course of her existence. Guillaume immediately desired that the date of the wedding should be fixed, and accommodation provided for the young couple in the rooms overhead. And as Pierre glanced at him with some remaining anxiety and spoke of travelling, for he feared that his wound was not yet healed, and that their presence might

bring him suffering, Guillaume responded: "No, no, I mean to keep you. If I'm marrying you, it is to have you both here. Don't worry about me. I have so much work to do, I shall work."

In the evening when Thomas and François came home and learnt the news, they did not seem particularly surprised by it. They had doubtless felt that things would end like this. And they bowed to the *dénouement*, not venturing to say a word, since it was their father himself who announced the decision which had been taken, with his usual air of composure. As for Antoine, who on his own side quivered with love for Lise, he gazed with doubting, anxious eyes at his father, who had thus had the courage to pluck out his heart. Could he really survive such a sacrifice, must it not kill him? Then Antoine kissed his father passionately, and the elder brothers in their turn embraced him with all their hearts. Guillaume smiled and his eyes became moist. After his victory over his horrible torments nothing could have been sweeter to him than the embraces of his three big sons.

There was, however, further emotion in store for him that evening. Just as the daylight was departing, and he was sitting at his large table near the window, again checking and classifying the documents and plans connected with his invention, he was surprised to see his old master and friend Bertheroy enter the workroom. The illustrious chemist called on him in this fashion at long intervals, and Guillaume felt the honour thus conferred on him by this old man to whom eminence and fame had brought so many titles, offices and decorations. Moreover, Bertheroy, with

his position as an official *savant* and member of the Institute, showed some courage in thus venturing to call on one whom so-called respectable folks regarded with contumely. And on this occasion, Guillaume at once understood that it was some feeling of curiosity that had brought him. And so he was greatly embarrassed, for he hardly dared to remove the papers and plans which were lying on the table.

"Oh, don't be frightened," gaily exclaimed Bertheroy, who, despite his careless and abrupt ways, was really very shrewd. "I haven't come to pry into your secrets. . . . Leave your papers there, I promise you that I won't read anything."

Then, in all frankness, he turned the conversation on the subject of explosives, which he was still studying, he said, with passionate interest. He had made some new discoveries which he did not conceal. Incidentally, too, he spoke of the opinion he had given in Salvat's affair. His dream was to discover some explosive of great power, which one might attempt to domesticate and reduce to complete obedience. And with a smile he pointedly concluded: "I don't know where that madman found the formula of his powder. But if you should ever discover it, remember that the future perhaps lies in the employment of explosives as motive power."

Then, all at once, he added: "By the way, that fellow Salvat will be executed on the day after to-morrow. A friend of mine at the Ministry of Justice has just told me so."

Guillaume had hitherto listened to him with an air of mingled distrust and amusement. But this an-

nouncement of Salvat's execution stirred him to anger and revolt, though for some days past he had known it to be inevitable, in spite of the sympathy which the condemned man was now rousing in many quarters.

"It will be a murder!" he cried vehemently.

Bertheroy waved his hand: "What would you have?" he answered: "there's a social system and it defends itself when it is attacked. Besides, those Anarchists are really too foolish in imagining that they will transform the world with their squibs and crackers! In my opinion, you know, science is the only revolutionist. Science will not only bring us truth but justice also, if indeed justice ever be possible on this earth. And that is why I lead so calm a life and am so tolerant."

Once again Bertheroy appeared to Guillaume as a revolutionist, one who was convinced that he helped on the ruin of the ancient abominable society of to-day, with its dogmas and laws, even whilst he was working in the depths of his laboratory. He was, however, too desirous of repose, and had too great a contempt for futilities to mingle with the events of the day, and he preferred to live in quietude, liberally paid and rewarded, and at peace with the government whatever it might be, whilst at the same time foreseeing and preparing for the formidable parturition of the future.

He waved his hand towards Paris, over which a sun of victory was setting, and then again spoke: "Do you hear the rumble? It is we who are the stokers, we who are ever flinging fresh fuel under the boiler. Science does not pause in her work for a single hour,

and she is the artisan of Paris, which — let us hope it — will be the artisan of the future. All the rest is of no account.”

But Guillaume was no longer listening to him. He was thinking of Salvat and the terrible engine of war he had invented, that engine which before long would shatter cities. And a new idea was dawning and growing in his mind. He had just freed himself of his last tie, he had created all the happiness he could create around him. Ah ! to recover his courage, to be master of himself once more, and, at any rate, derive from the sacrifice of his heart the lofty delight of being free, of being able to lay down even his life, should he some day deem it necessary !

BOOK V



I

THE GUILLOTINE

FOR some reason of his own Guillaume was bent upon witnessing the execution of Salvat. Pierre tried to dissuade him from doing so; and finding his efforts vain, became somewhat anxious. He accordingly resolved to spend the night at Montmartre, accompany his brother and watch over him. In former times, when engaged with Abbé Rose in charitable work in the Charonne district, he had learnt that the guillotine could be seen from the house where Mège, the Socialist deputy, resided at the corner of the Rue Merlin. He therefore offered himself as a guide. As the execution was to take place as soon as it should legally be daybreak, that is, about half-past four o'clock, the brothers did not go to bed but sat up in the work-room, feeling somewhat drowsy, and exchanging few words. Then as soon as two o'clock struck, they started off.

The night was beautifully serene and clear. The full moon, shining like a silver lamp in the cloudless, far-stretching heavens, threw a calm, dreamy light over the vague immensity of Paris, which was like some spell-bound city of sleep, so overcome by fatigue that not a murmur arose from it. It was as if be-

neath the soft radiance which spread over its roofs, its panting labour and its cries of suffering were lulled to repose until the dawn. Yet, in a far, out of the way district, dark work was even now progressing, a knife was being raised on high in order that a man might be killed.

Pierre and Guillaume paused in the Rue St. Eleuthère, and gazed at the vaporous, tremulous city spread out below them. And as they turned they perceived the basilica of the Sacred Heart, still domeless but already looking huge indeed in the moonbeams, whose clear white light accentuated its outlines and brought them into sharp relief against a mass of shadows. Under the pale nocturnal sky, the edifice showed like a colossal monster, symbolical of provocation and sovereign dominion. Never before had Guillaume found it so huge, never had it appeared to him to dominate Paris, even in the latter's hours of slumber, with such stubborn and overwhelming might.

This wounded him so keenly in the state of mind in which he found himself, that he could not help exclaiming: "Ah! they chose a good site for it, and how stupid it was to let them do so! I know of nothing more nonsensical; Paris crowned and dominated by that temple of idolatry! How impudent it is, what a buffet for the cause of reason after so many centuries of science, labour, and battle! And to think of it being reared over Paris, the one city in the world which ought never to have been soiled in this fashion! One can understand it at Lourdes and Rome; but not in Paris, in the very field of intelligence which has been so deeply ploughed, and whence the future is sprout-

ing. It is a declaration of war, an insolent proclamation that they hope to conquer Paris also!"

Guillaume usually evinced all the tolerance of a *savant*, for whom religions are simply social phenomena. He even willingly admitted the grandeur or grace of certain Catholic legends. But Marie Alacoque's famous vision, which has given rise to the cult of the Sacred Heart, filled him with irritation and something like physical disgust. He suffered at the mere idea of Christ's open, bleeding breast, and the gigantic heart which the saint asserted she had seen beating in the depths of the wound—the huge heart in which Jesus placed the woman's little heart to restore it to her inflated and glowing with love. What base and loathsome materialism there was in all this! What a display of viscera, muscles and blood suggestive of a butcher's shop! And Guillaume was particularly disgusted with the engraving which depicted this horror, and which he found everywhere, crudely coloured with red and yellow and blue, like some badly executed anatomical plate.

Pierre on his side was also looking at the basilica as, white with moonlight, it rose out of the darkness like a gigantic fortress raised to crush and conquer the city slumbering beneath it. It had already brought him suffering during the last days when he had said mass in it and was struggling with his torments. "They call it the national votive offering," he now exclaimed. "But the nation's longing is for health and strength and restoration to its old position by work. That is a thing the Church does not understand. It argues that if France was stricken with

defeat, it was because she deserved punishment. She was guilty, and so to-day she ought to repent. Repent of what? Of the Revolution, of a century of free examination and science, of the emancipation of her mind, of her initiatory and liberative labour in all parts of the world? That indeed is her real transgression; and it is as a punishment for all our labour, search for truth, increase of knowledge and march towards justice that they have reared that huge pile which Paris will see from all her streets, and will never be able to see without feeling derided and insulted in her labour and glory."

With a wave of his hand he pointed to the city, slumbering in the moonlight as beneath a sheet of silver, and then set off again with his brother, down the slopes, towards the black and deserted streets.

They did not meet a living soul until they reached the outer boulevard. Here, however, no matter what the hour may be, life continues with scarcely a pause. No sooner are the wine shops, music and dancing halls closed, than vice and want, cast into the street, there resume their nocturnal existence. Thus the brothers came upon all the homeless ones: low prostitutes seeking a pallet, vagabonds stretched on the benches under the trees, rogues who prowled hither and thither on the lookout for a good stroke. Encouraged by their accomplice — night, all the mire and woe of Paris had returned to the surface. The empty roadway now belonged to the breadless, homeless starvelings, those for whom there was no place in the sunlight, the vague, swarming, despairing herd which is only espied at night-time. Ah! what spectres of destitution, what

apparitions of grief and fright there were! What a sob of agony passed by in Paris that morning, when as soon as the dawn should rise, a man — a pauper, a sufferer like the others — was to be guillotined!

As Guillaume and Pierre were about to descend the Rue des Martyrs, the former perceived an old man lying on a bench with his bare feet protruding from his gaping, filthy shoes. Guillaume pointed to him in silence. Then, a few steps farther on, Pierre in his turn pointed to a ragged girl, crouching, asleep with open mouth, in the corner of a doorway. There was no need for the brothers to express in words all the compassion and anger which stirred their hearts. At long intervals policemen, walking slowly two by two, shook the poor wretches and compelled them to rise and walk on and on. Occasionally, if they found them suspicious or refractory, they marched them off to the police-station. And then rancour and the contagion of imprisonment often transformed a mere vagabond into a thief or a murderer.

In the Rue des Martyrs and the Rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, the brothers found night-birds of another kind, women who slunk past them, close to the house-fronts, and men and hussies who belaboured one another with blows. Then, upon the grand boulevards, on the thresholds of lofty black houses, only one row of whose windows flared in the night, pale-faced individuals, who had just come down from their clubs, stood lighting cigars before going home. A lady with a ball wrap over her evening gown went by accompanied by a servant. A few cabs, moreover, still jogged up and down the roadway, while others, which had

been waiting for hours, stood on their ranks in rows, with drivers and horses alike asleep. And as one boulevard after another was reached, the Boulevard Poissonnière, the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle, the Boulevard St. Denis, and so forth, as far as the Place de la République, there came fresh want and misery, more forsaken and hungry ones, more and more of the human "waste" that is cast into the streets and the darkness. And on the other hand, an army of street-sweepers was now appearing to remove all the filth of the past four and twenty hours, in order that Paris, spruce already at sunrise, might not blush for having thrown up such a mass of dirt and loathsomeness in the course of a single day.

It was, however, more particularly after following the Boulevard Voltaire, and drawing near to the districts of La Roquette and Charonne, that the brothers felt they were returning to a sphere of labour where there was often lack of food, and where life was but so much pain. Pierre found himself at home here. In former days, accompanied by good Abbé Rose, visiting despairing ones, distributing alms, picking up children who had sunk to the gutter, he had a hundred times perambulated every one of those long, densely populated streets. And thus a frightful vision arose before his mind's eye; he recalled all the tragedies he had witnessed, all the shrieks he had heard, all the tears and bloodshed he had seen, all the fathers, mothers and children huddled together and dying of want, dirt and abandonment: that social hell in which he had ended by losing his last hopes, fleeing from it with a sob in the conviction that

charity was a mere amusement for the rich, and absolutely futile as a remedy. It was this conviction which now returned to him as he again cast eyes upon that want and grief stricken district which seemed fated to everlasting destitution. That poor old man whom Abbé Rose had revived one night in yonder hovel, had he not since died of starvation? That little girl whom he had one morning brought in his arms to the refuge after her parents' death, was it not she whom he had just met, grown but fallen to the streets, and shrieking beneath the fist of a bully? Ah! how great was the number of the wretched! Their name was legion! There were those whom one could not save, those who were hourly born to a life of woe and want, even as one may be born infirm, and those, too, who from every side sank in the sea of human injustice, that ocean which has ever been the same for centuries past, and which though one may strive to drain it, still and for ever spreads. How heavy was the silence, how dense the darkness in those working-class streets where sleep seems to be the comrade of death! Yet hunger prowls, and misfortune sobs; vague spectral forms slink by, and then are lost to view in the depths of the night.

As Pierre and Guillaume went along they became mixed with dark groups of people, a whole flock of inquisitive folk, a promiscuous, passionate tramp, tramp towards the guillotine. It came from all Paris, urged on by brutish fever, a hankering for death and blood. In spite, however, of the dull noise which came from this dim crowd, the mean streets that were passed remained quite dark, not a light appeared at

any of their windows; nor could one hear the breathing of the weary toilers stretched on their wretched pallets from which they would not rise before the morning twilight.

On seeing the jostling crowd which was already assembled on the Place Voltaire, Pierre understood that it would be impossible for him and his brother to ascend the Rue de la Roquette. Barriers, moreover, must certainly have been thrown across that street. In order therefore to reach the corner of the Rue Merlin, it occurred to him to take the Rue de la Folie Regnault, which winds round in the rear of the prison, farther on.

Here indeed they found solitude and darkness again.

The huge, massive prison with its great bare walls on which a moonray fell, looked like some pile of cold stones, dead for centuries past. At the end of the street they once more fell in with the crowd, a dim restless mass of beings, whose pale faces alone could be distinguished. The brothers had great difficulty in reaching the house in which Mège resided at the corner of the Rue Merlin. All the shutters of the fourth-floor flat occupied by the Socialist deputy were closed, though every other window was wide open and crowded with surging sightseers. Moreover, the wine shop down below and the first-floor room connected with it flared with gas, and were already crowded with noisy customers, waiting for the performance to begin.

"I hardly like to go and knock at Mège's door," said Pierre.

"No, no, you must not do so!" replied Guillaume.

"Let us go into the wine shop. We may perhaps be able to see something from the balcony."

The first-floor room was provided with a very large balcony, which women and gentlemen were already filling. The brothers nevertheless managed to reach it, and for a few minutes remained there, peering into the darkness before them. The sloping street grew broader between the two prisons, the "great" and the "little" Roquette, in such wise as to form a sort of square, which was shaded by four clumps of plane-trees, rising from the footways. The low buildings and scrubby trees, all poor and ugly of aspect, seemed almost to lie on a level with the ground, under a vast sky in which stars were appearing, as the moon gradually declined. And the square was quite empty save that on one spot yonder there seemed to be some little stir. Two rows of guards prevented the crowd from advancing, and even threw it back into the neighbouring streets. On the one hand, the only lofty houses were far away, at the point where the Rue St. Maur intersects the Rue de la Roquette; while, on the other, they stood at the corners of the Rue Merlin and the Rue de la Folie Regnault, so that it was almost impossible to distinguish anything of the execution even from the best placed windows. As for the inquisitive folk on the pavement they only saw the backs of the guards. Still this did not prevent a crush. The human tide flowed on from all sides with increasing clamour.

Guided by the remarks of some women who, leaning forward on the balcony, had been watching the square for a long time already, the brothers were at

last able to perceive something. It was now half-past three, and the guillotine was nearly ready. The little stir which one vaguely espied yonder under the trees, was that of the headsman's assistants fixing the knife in position. A lantern slowly came and went, and five or six shadows danced over the ground. But nothing else could be distinguished, the square was like a large black pit, around which ever broke the waves of the noisy crowd which one could not see. And beyond the square one could only identify the flaring wine shops, which showed forth like light-houses in the night. All the surrounding district of poverty and toil was still asleep, not a gleam as yet came from workrooms or yards, not a puff of smoke from the lofty factory chimneys.

"We shall see nothing," Guillaume remarked.

But Pierre silenced him, for he has just discovered that an elegantly attired gentleman leaning over the balcony near him was none other than the amiable deputy Duthil. He had at first fancied that a woman muffled in wraps who stood close beside the deputy was the little Princess de Harn, whom he had very likely brought to see the execution since he had taken her to see the trial. On closer inspection, however, he had found that this woman was Silviane, the perverse creature with the virginal face. Truth to tell, she made no concealment of her presence, but talked on in an extremely loud voice, as if intoxicated; and the brothers soon learnt how it was that she happened to be there. Duvillard, Duthil, and other friends had been supping with her at one o'clock in the morning, when on learning that Salvat was about to be guillo-

tined, the fancy of seeing the execution had suddenly come upon her. Duvillard, after vainly entreating her to do nothing of the kind, had gone off in a fury, for he felt that it would be most unseemly on his part to attend the execution of a man who had endeavoured to blow up his house. And thereupon Silviane had turned to Duthil, whom her caprice greatly worried, for he held all such loathsome spectacles in horror, and had already refused to act as escort to the Princess. However, he was so infatuated with Silviane's beauty, and she made him so many promises, that he had at last consented to take her.

"He can't understand people caring for amusement," she said, speaking of the Baron. "And yet this is really a thing to see. . . . But no matter, you'll find him at my feet again to-morrow."

Duthil smiled and responded: "I suppose that peace has been signed and ratified now that you have secured your engagement at the Comédie."

"Peace? No!" she protested. "No, no. There will be no peace between us until I have made my *début*. After that, we'll see."

They both laughed; and then Duthil, by way of paying his court, told her how good-naturedly Dauvergne, the new Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, had adjusted the difficulties which had hitherto kept the doors of the Comédie closed upon her. A really charming man was Dauvergne, the embodiment of graciousness, the very flower of the Monferrand ministry. His was the velvet hand in that administration whose leader had a hand of iron.

"He told me, my beauty," said Duthil, "that a

pretty girl was in place everywhere." And then as Silviane, as if flattered, pressed closely beside him, the deputy added: "So that wonderful revival of 'Polyeucte,' in which you are going to have such a triumph, is to take place on the day after to-morrow. We shall all go to applaud you, remember."

"Yes, on the evening of the day after to-morrow," said Silviane, "the very same day when the wedding of the Baron's daughter will take place. There'll be plenty of emotion that day!"

"Ah! yes, of course!" retorted Duthil, "there'll be the wedding of our friend Gérard with Mademoiselle Camille to begin with. We shall have a crush at the Madeleine in the morning and another at the Comédie in the evening. You are quite right, too; there will be several hearts throbbing in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy."

Thereupon they again became merry, and jested about the Duvillard family—father, mother, lover and daughter—with the greatest possible ferocity and crudity of language. Then, all at once Silviane exclaimed: "Do you know, I'm feeling awfully bored here, my little Duthil. I can't distinguish anything, and I should like to be quite near so as to see it all plainly. You must take me over yonder, close to that machine of theirs."

This request threw Duthil into consternation, particularly as at that same moment Silviane perceived Massot outside the wine shop, and began calling and beckoning to him imperiously. A brief conversation then ensued between the young woman and the journalist: "I say, Massot!" she called, "hasn't a deputy

the right to pass the guards and take a lady wherever he likes ? ”

“Not at all!” exclaimed Duthil. “Massot knows very well that a deputy ought to be the very first to bow to the laws.”

This exclamation warned Massot that Duthil did not wish to leave the balcony. “You ought to have secured a card of invitation, madame,” said he, in reply to Silviane. “They would then have found you room at one of the windows of La Petite Roquette. Women are not allowed elsewhere. . . . But you mustn’t complain, you have a very good place up there.”

“But I can see nothing at all, my dear Massot.”

“Well, you will in any case see more than Princess de Harn will. Just now I came upon her carriage in the Rue du Chemin Vert. The police would not allow it to come any nearer.”

This news made Silviane merry again, whilst Duthil shuddered at the idea of the danger he incurred, for Rosemonde would assuredly treat him to a terrible scene should she see him with another woman. Then, an idea occurring to him, he ordered a bottle of champagne and some little cakes for his “beautiful friend,” as he called Silviane. She had been complaining of thirst, and was delighted with the opportunity of perfecting her intoxication. When a waiter had managed to place a little table near her, on the balcony itself, she found things very pleasant, and indeed considered it quite brave to tipple and sup afresh, while waiting for that man to be guillotined close by.

It was impossible for Pierre and Guillaume to re-

main up there any longer. All that they heard, all that they beheld filled them with disgust. The boredom of waiting had turned all the inquisitive folks of the balcony and the adjoining room into customers. The waiter could hardly manage to serve the many glasses of beer, bottles of expensive wine, biscuits, and plates of cold meat which were ordered of him. And yet the spectators here were all *bourgeois*, rich gentlemen, people of society! On the other hand, time has to be killed somehow when it hangs heavily on one's hands; and thus there were bursts of laughter and paltry and horrible jests, quite a feverish uproar arising amidst the clouds of smoke from the men's cigars. When Pierre and Guillaume passed through the wine shop on the ground-floor they there found a similar crush and similar tumult, aggravated by the disorderly behaviour of the big fellows in blouses who were drinking draught wine at the pewter bar which shone like silver. There were people, too, at all the little tables, besides an incessant coming and going of folks who entered the place for a "wet," by way of calming their impatience. And what folks they were! All the scum, all the vagabonds who had been dragging themselves about since daybreak on the lookout for whatever chance might offer them, provided it were not work!

On the pavement outside, Pierre and Guillaume felt yet a greater heart-pang. In the throng which the guards kept back, one simply found so much mire stirred up from the very depths of Paris life: prostitutes and criminals, the murderers of to-morrow, who came to see how a man ought to die. Loathsome,

bareheaded harlots mingled with bands of prowlers or ran through the crowd, howling obscene refrains. Bandits stood in groups chatting and quarrelling about the more or less glorious manner in which certain famous *guillotinés* had died. Among these was one with respect to whom they all agreed, and of whom they spoke as of a great captain, a hero whose marvellous courage was deserving of immortality. Then, as one passed along, one caught snatches of horrible phrases, particulars about the instrument of death, ignoble boasts, and filthy jests reeking with blood. And over and above all else there was bestial fever, a lust for death which made this multitude delirious, an eagerness to see life flow forth fresh and ruddy beneath the knife, so that as it coursed over the soil they might dip their feet in it. As this execution was not an ordinary one, however, there were yet spectators of another kind; silent men with glowing eyes who came and went all alone, and who were plainly thrilled by their faith, intoxicated with the contagious madness which incites one to vengeance or martyrdom.

Guillaume was just thinking of Victor Mathis, when he fancied that he saw him standing in the front row of sightseers whom the guards held in check. It was indeed he, with his thin, beardless, pale, drawn face. Short as he was, he had to raise himself on tiptoes in order to see anything. Near him was a big, red-haired girl who gesticulated; but for his part he never stirred or spoke. He was waiting motionless, gazing yonder with the round, ardent, fixed eyes of a night-bird, seeking to penetrate the darkness. At last a guard

pushed him back in a somewhat brutal way; but he soon returned to his previous position, ever patient though full of hatred against the executioners, wishing indeed to see all he could in order to increase his hate.

Then Massot approached the brothers. This time, on seeing Pierre without his cassock, he did not even make a sign of astonishment, but gaily remarked: "So you felt curious to see this affair, Monsieur Froment?"

"Yes, I came with my brother," Pierre replied. "But I very much fear that we shan't see much."

"You certainly won't if you stay here," rejoined Massot. And thereupon in his usual good-natured way—glad, moreover, to show what power a well-known journalist could wield—he inquired: "Would you like me to pass you through? The inspector here happens to be a friend of mine."

Then, without waiting for an answer, he stopped the inspector and hastily whispered to him that he had brought a couple of colleagues, who wanted to report the proceedings. At first the inspector hesitated, and seemed inclined to refuse Massot's request; but after a moment, influenced by the covert fear which the police always has of the press, he made a weary gesture of consent.

"Come, quick, then," said Massot, turning to the brothers, and taking them along with him.

A moment later, to the intense surprise of Pierre and Guillaume, the guards opened their ranks to let them pass. They then found themselves in the large open space which was kept clear. And on thus

emerging from the tumultuous throng they were quite impressed by the death-like silence and solitude which reigned under the little plane-trees. The night was now paling. A faint gleam of dawn was already falling from the sky.

After leading his companions slantwise across the square, Massot stopped them near the prison and resumed: "I'm going inside; I want to see the prisoner roused and got ready. In the meantime, walk about here; nobody will say anything to you. Besides, I'll come back to you in a moment."

A hundred people or so, journalists and other privileged spectators, were scattered about the dark square. Movable wooden barriers—such as are set up at the doors of theatres when there is a press of people waiting for admission—had been placed on either side of the pavement running from the prison gate to the guillotine; and some sightseers were already leaning over these barriers, in order to secure a close view of the condemned man as he passed by. Others were walking slowly to and fro, and conversing in undertones. The brothers, for their part, approached the guillotine.

It stood there under the branches of the trees, amidst the delicate greenery of the fresh leaves of spring. A neighbouring gas-lamp, whose light was turning yellow in the rising dawn, cast vague gleams upon it. The work of fixing it in position—work performed as quietly as could be, so that the only sound was the occasional thud of a mallet—had just been finished; and the headsman's "valets" or assistants, in frock-coats and tall silk hats, were waiting

and strolling about in a patient way. But the instrument itself, how base and shameful it looked, squatting on the ground like some filthy beast, disgusted with the work it had to accomplish! What! those few beams lying on the ground, and those others barely nine feet high which rose from it, keeping the knife in position, constituted the machine which avenged Society, the instrument which gave a warning to evil-doers! Where was the big scaffold painted a bright red and reached by a stairway of ten steps, the scaffold which raised high bloody arms over the eager multitude, so that everybody might behold the punishment of the law in all its horror! The beast had now been felled to the ground, where it simply looked ignoble, crafty and cowardly. If on the one hand there was no majesty in the manner in which human justice condemned a man to death at its as-sizes: on the other, there was merely horrid butchery with the help of the most barbarous and repulsive of mechanical contrivances, on the terrible day when that man was executed.

As Pierre and Guillaume gazed at the guillotine, a feeling of nausea came over them. Daylight was now slowly breaking, and the surroundings were appearing to view: first the square itself with its two low, grey prisons, facing one another; then the distant houses, the taverns, the marble workers' establishments, and the shops selling flowers and wreaths, which are numerous hereabouts, as the cemetery of Père-Lachaise is so near. Before long one could plainly distinguish the black lines of the spectators standing around in a circle, the heads leaning forward from windows and

balconies, and the people who had climbed to the very house roofs. The prison of La Petite Roquette over the way had been turned into a kind of tribune for guests; and mounted Gardes de Paris went slowly to and fro across the intervening expanse. Then, as the sky brightened, labour awoke throughout the district beyond the crowd, a district of broad, endless streets lined with factories, work-shops and work-yards. Engines began to snort, machinery and appliances were got ready to start once more on their usual tasks, and smoke already curled away from the forest of lofty brick chimneys which, on all sides, sprang out of the gloom.

It then seemed to Guillaume that the guillotine was really in its right place in that district of want and toil. It stood in its own realm, like a *terminus* and a threat. Did not ignorance, poverty and woe lead to it? And each time that it was set up amidst those toilsome streets, was it not charged to overawe the disinherited ones, the starvelings, who, exasperated by everlasting injustice, were always ready for revolt? It was not seen in the districts where wealth and enjoyment reigned. It would there have seemed purposeless, degrading and truly monstrous. And it was a tragical and terrible coincidence that the bomb-thrower, driven mad by want, should be guillotined there, in the very centre of want's dominion.

But daylight had come at last, for it was nearly half-past four. The distant noisy crowd could feel that the expected moment was drawing nigh. A shudder suddenly sped through the atmosphere.

"He's coming," exclaimed little Massot, as he came

back to Pierre and Guillaume. "Ah! that Salvat is a brave fellow after all."

Then he related how the prisoner had been awakened; how the governor of the prison, magistrate Amadiou, the chaplain, and a few other persons had entered the cell where Salvat lay fast asleep; and then how the condemned man had understood the truth immediately upon opening his eyes. He had risen, looking pale but quite composed. And he had dressed himself without assistance, and had declined the nip of brandy and the cigarette proffered by the good-hearted chaplain, in the same way as with a gentle but stubborn gesture he had brushed the crucifix aside. Then had come the "toilette" for death. With all rapidity and without a word being exchanged, Salvat's hands had been tied behind his back, his legs had been loosely secured with a cord, and the neckband of his shirt had been cut away. He had smiled when the others exhorted him to be brave. He only feared some nervous weakness, and had but one desire, to die like a hero, to remain the martyr of the ardent faith in truth and justice for which he was about to perish.

"They are now drawing up the death certificate in the register," continued Massot in his chattering way. "Come along, come along to the barriers if you wish a good view. . . . I turned paler, you know, and trembled far more than he did. I don't care a rap for anything as a rule; but, all the same, an execution isn't a pleasant business. . . . You can't imagine how many attempts were made to save Salvat's life. Even some of the papers asked that he might be reprieved. But nothing succeeded, the execution was

regarded as inevitable, it seems, even by those who consider it a blunder. Still, they had such a touching opportunity to reprieve him, when his daughter, little Céline, wrote that fine letter to the President of the Republic, which I was the first to publish in the 'Globe.' Ah! that letter, it cost me a lot of running about!"

Pierre, who was already quite upset by this long wait for the horrible scene, felt moved to tears by Massot's reference to Céline. He could again see the child standing beside Madame Théodore in that bare, cold room whither her father would never more return. It was thence that he had set out on a day of desperation with his stomach empty and his brain on fire, and it was here that he would end, between yonder beams, beneath yonder knife.

Massot, however, was still giving particulars. The doctors, said he, were furious because they feared that the body would not be delivered to them immediately after the execution. To this Guillaume did not listen. He stood there with his elbows resting on the wooden barrier and his eyes fixed on the prison gate, which still remained shut. His hands were quivering, and there was an expression of anguish on his face as if it were he himself who was about to be executed. The headsman had again just left the prison. He was a little, insignificant-looking man, and seemed annoyed, anxious to have done with it all. Then, among a group of frock-coated gentlemen, some of the spectators pointed out Gascogne, the Chief of the Detective Police, who wore a cold, official air, and Amadiou, the investigating magistrate, who smiled

and looked very spruce, early though the hour was. He had come partly because it was his duty, and partly because he wished to show himself now that the curtain was about to fall on a wonderful tragedy of which he considered himself the author. Guillaume glanced at him, and then as a growing uproar rose from the distant crowd, he looked up for an instant, and again beheld the two grey prisons, the plane-trees with their fresh young leaves, and the houses swarming with people beneath the pale blue sky, in which the triumphant sun was about to appear.

“Look out, here he comes !”

Who had spoken? A slight noise, that of the opening gate, made every heart throb. Necks were outstretched, eyes gazed fixedly, there was laboured breathing on all sides. Salvat stood on the threshold of the prison. The chaplain, stepping backwards, had come out in advance of him, in order to conceal the guillotine from his sight, but he had stopped short, for he wished to see that instrument of death, make acquaintance with it, as it were, before he walked towards it. And as he stood there, his long, aged sunken face, on which life's hardships had left their mark, seemed transformed by the wondrous brilliancy of his flaring, dreamy eyes. Enthusiasm bore him up — he was going to his death in all the splendour of his dream. When the executioner's assistants drew near to support him he once more refused their help, and again set himself in motion, advancing with short steps, but as quickly and as straightly as the rope hampering his legs permitted.

All at once Guillaume felt that Salvat's eyes were

fixed upon him. Drawing nearer and nearer the condemned man had perceived and recognised his friend ; and as he passed by, at a distance of no more than six or seven feet, he smiled faintly and darted such a deep penetrating glance at Guillaume, that ever afterwards the latter felt its smart. But what last thought, what supreme legacy had Salvat left him to meditate upon, perhaps to put into execution ? It was all so poignant that Pierre feared some involuntary call on his brother's part ; and so he laid his hand upon his arm to quiet him.

“Long live Anarchy !”

It was Salvat who had raised this cry. But in the deep silence his husky, altered voice seemed to break. The few who were near at hand had turned very pale ; the distant crowd seemed bereft of life. The horse of one of the Gardes de Paris was alone heard snorting in the centre of the space which had been kept clear.

Then came a loathsome scramble, a scene of nameless brutality and ignominy. The headsman's helps rushed upon Salvat as he came up slowly with brow erect. Two of them seized him by the head, but finding little hair there, could only lower it by tugging at his neck. Next two others grasped him by the legs and flung him violently upon a plank which tilted over and rolled forward. Then, by dint of pushing and tugging, the head was got into the “lunette,” the upper part of which fell in such wise that the neck was fixed as in a ship's port-hole—and all this was accomplished amidst such confusion and with such savagery that one might have thought that head some cumbrous thing which it was necessary to get

rid of with the greatest speed. But the knife fell with a dull, heavy, forcible thud, and two long jets of blood spurted from the severed arteries, while the dead man's feet moved convulsively. Nothing else could be seen. The executioner rubbed his hands in a mechanical way, and an assistant took the severed blood-streaming head from the little basket into which it had fallen and placed it in the large basket into which the body had already been turned.

Ah! that dull, that heavy thud of the knife! It seemed to Guillaume that he had heard it echoing far away all over that district of want and toil, even in the squalid rooms where thousands of workmen were at that moment rising to perform their day's hard task! And there the echo of that thud acquired formidable significance; it spoke of man's exasperation with injustice, of zeal for martyrdom, and of the dolorous hope that the blood then spilt might hasten the victory of the disinherited.

Pierre, for his part, at the sight of that loathsome butchery, the abject cutthroat work of that killing machine, had suddenly felt his chilling shudder become more violent; for before him arose a vision of another corpse, that of the fair, pretty child ripped open by a bomb and stretched yonder, at the entrance of the Duvillard mansion. Blood streamed from her delicate flesh, just as it had streamed from that decapitated neck. It was blood paying for blood; it was like payment for mankind's debt of wretchedness, for which payment is everlastingly being made, without man ever being able to free himself from suffering.

Above the square and the crowd all was still silent in the clear sky. How long had the abomination lasted? An eternity, perhaps, compressed into two or three minutes. And now came an awakening: the spectators emerged from their nightmare with quivering hands, livid faces, and eyes expressive of compassion, disgust and fear.

"That makes another one. I've now seen four executions," said Massot, who felt ill at ease. "After all, I prefer to report weddings. Let us go off, I have all I want for my article."

Guillaume and Pierre followed him mechanically across the square, and again reached the corner of the Rue Merlin. And here they saw little Victor Mathis, with flaming eyes and white face, still standing in silence on the spot where they had left him. He could have seen nothing distinctly; but the thud of the knife was still echoing in his brain. A policeman at last gave him a push, and told him to move on. At this he looked the policeman in the face, stirred by sudden rage and ready to strangle him. Then, however, he quietly walked away, ascending the Rue de la Roquette, atop of which the lofty foliage of Père-Lachaise could be seen, beneath the rising sun.

The brothers meantime fell upon a scene of explanations, which they heard without wishing to do so. Now that the sight was over, the Princess de Harn arrived, and she was the more furious as at the door of the wine shop she could see her new friend Duthil accompanying a woman.

"I say!" she exclaimed, "you are nice, you are, to have left me in the lurch like this! It was impossi-

ble for my carriage to get near, so I've had to come on foot through all those horrid people who have been jostling and insulting me."

Thereupon Duthil, with all promptitude, introduced Silviane to her, adding, in an aside, that he had taken a friend's place as the actress's escort. And then Rosemonde, who greatly wished to know Silviane, calmed down as if by enchantment, and put on her most engaging ways. "It would have delighted me, madame," said she, "to have seen this sight in the company of an *artiste* of your merit, one whom I admire so much, though I have never before had an opportunity of telling her so."

"Well, dear me, madame," replied Silviane, "you haven't lost much by arriving late. We were on that balcony there, and all that I could see were a few men pushing another one about. . . . It really isn't worth the trouble of coming."

"Well, now that we have become acquainted, madame," said the Princess, "I really hope that you will allow me to be your friend."

"Certainly, madame, my friend; and I shall be flattered and delighted to be yours."

Standing there, hand in hand, they smiled at one another. Silviane was very drunk, but her virginal expression had returned to her face; whilst Rosemonde seemed feverish with vicious curiosity. Duthil, whom the scene amused, now had but one thought, that of seeing Silviane home; so calling to Massot, who was approaching, he asked him where he should find a cab-rank. Rosemonde, however, at once offered her carriage, which was waiting in an adjacent street.

She would set the actress down at her door, said she, and the deputy at his ; and such was her persistence in the matter that Duthil, greatly vexed, was obliged to accept her offer.

"Well, then, till to-morrow at the Madeleine," said Massot, again quite sprightly, as he shook hands with the Princess.

"Yes, till to-morrow, at the Madeleine and the Comédie."

"Ah ! yes, of course !" he repeated, taking Silviane's hand, which he kissed. "The Madeleine in the morning and the Comédie in the evening. . . . We shall all be there to applaud you."

"Yes, I expect you to do so," said Silviane. "Till to-morrow, then !"

"Till to-morrow !"

The crowd was now wearily dispersing, to all appearance disappointed and ill at ease. A few enthusiasts alone lingered in order to witness the departure of the van in which Salvat's corpse would soon be removed ; while bands of prowlers and harlots, looking very wan in the daylight, whistled or called to one another with some last filthy expression before returning to their dens. The headsman's assistants were hastily taking down the guillotine, and the square would soon be quite clear.

Pierre for his part wished to lead his brother away. Since the fall of the knife, Guillaume had remained as if stunned, without once opening his lips. In vain had Pierre tried to rouse him by pointing to the shutters of Mège's flat, which still remained closed, whereas every other window of the lofty house was

wide open. Although the Socialist deputy hated the Anarchists, those shutters were doubtless closed as a protest against capital punishment. Whilst the multitude had been rushing to that frightful spectacle, Mège, still in bed, with his face turned to the wall, had probably been dreaming of how he would some day compel mankind to be happy beneath the rigid laws of Collectivism. Affectionate father as he was, the recent death of one of his children had quite upset his private life. His cough, too, had become a very bad one; but he ardently wished to live, for as soon as that new Monferrand ministry should have fallen beneath the interpellation which he already contemplated, his own turn would surely come: he would take the reins of power in hand, abolish the guillotine and decree justice and perfect felicity.

"Do you see, Guillaume?" Pierre gently repeated. "Mège hasn't opened his windows. He's a good fellow, after all; although our friends Bache and Morin dislike him." Then, as his brother still refrained from answering, Pierre added, "Come, let us go, we must get back home."

They both turned into the Rue de la Folie Regnault, and reached the outer Boulevards by way of the Rue du Chemin Vert. All the toilers of the district were now at work. In the long streets edged with low buildings, work-shops and factories, one heard engines snorting and machinery rumbling, while up above, the smoke from the lofty chimneys was assuming a rosy hue in the sunrise. Afterwards, when the brothers reached the Boulevard de Menilmontant and the Boulevard de Belleville, which they followed in turn at a leisurely

pace, they witnessed the great rush of the working classes into central Paris. The stream poured forth from every side; from all the wretched streets of the faubourgs there was an endless exodus of toilers, who, having risen at dawn, were now hurrying, in the sharp morning air, to their daily labour. Some wore short jackets and others blouses; some were in velveteen trousers, others in linen overalls. Their thick shoes made their tramp a heavy one; their hanging hands were often deformed by work. And they seemed half asleep, not a smile was to be seen on any of those wan, weary faces turned yonder towards the everlasting task — the task which was begun afresh each day, and which — 'twas their only chance — they hoped to be able to take up for ever and ever. There was no end to that drove of toilers, that army of various callings, that human flesh fated to manual labour, upon which Paris preys in order that she may live in luxury and enjoyment.

Then the procession continued across the Boulevard de la Villette, the Boulevard de la Chapelle, and the Boulevard de Rochechouart, where one reached the height of Montmartre. More and more workmen were ever coming down from their bare cold rooms and plunging into the huge city, whence, tired out, they would that evening merely bring back the bread of rancour. And now, too, came a stream of work-girls, some of them in bright skirts, some glancing at the passers-by; girls whose wages were so paltry, so insufficient, that now and again pretty ones among them never more turned their faces homewards, whilst the ugly ones wasted away, condemned to mere bread and

water. A little later, moreover, came the *employés*, the clerks, the counter-jumpers, the whole world of frock-coated penury — “gentlemen” who devoured a roll as they hastened onward, worried the while by the dread of being unable to pay their rent, or by the problem of providing food for wife and children until the end of the month should come.¹ And now the sun was fast ascending on the horizon, the whole army of ants was out and about, and the toilsome day had begun with its ceaseless display of courage, energy and suffering.

Never before had it been so plainly manifest to Pierre that work was a necessity, that it healed and saved. On the occasion of his visit to the Grandidier works, and later still, when he himself had felt the need of occupation, there had come to him the thought that work was really the world’s law. And after that hateful night, after that spilling of blood, after the slaughter of that toiler maddened by his dreams, there was consolation and hope in seeing the sun rise once more, and everlasting labour take up its wonted task. However hard it might prove, however unjustly it might be lotted out, was it not work which would some day bring both justice and happiness to the world?

All at once, as the brothers were climbing the steep hillside towards Guillaume’s house, they perceived before and above them the basilica of the Sacred Heart rising majestically and triumphantly to the sky. This was no sublunar apparition, no dreamy vision of Domination standing face to face with nocturnal Paris.

¹ In Paris nearly all clerks and shop-assistants receive monthly salaries, while most workmen are paid once a fortnight. — *Trans.*

The sun now clothed the edifice with splendour, it looked golden and proud and victorious, flaring with immortal glory.

Then Guillaume, still silent, still feeling Salvat's last glance upon him, seemed to come to some sudden and final decision. He looked at the basilica with glowing eyes, and pronounced sentence upon it.

II

IN VANITY FAIR

THE wedding was to take place at noon, and for half an hour already guests had been pouring into the magnificently decorated church, which was leafy with evergreens and balmy with the scent of flowers. The high altar in the rear glowed with countless candles, and through the great doorway, which was wide open, one could see the peristyle decked with shrubs, the steps covered with a broad carpet, and the inquisitive crowd assembled on the square and even along the Rue Royale, under the bright sun.

After finding three more chairs for some ladies who had arrived rather late, Duthil remarked to Massot, who was jotting down names in his note-book: "Well, if any more come, they will have to remain standing."

"Who were those three?" the journalist inquired.

"The Duchess de Boisemont and her two daughters."

"Indeed! All the titled people of France, as well as all the financiers and politicians, are here! It's something more even than a swell Parisian wedding."

As a matter of fact all the spheres of "society" were gathered together there, and some at first seemed rather embarrassed at finding themselves beside others. Whilst Duvillard's name attracted all the princes of

finance and politicians in power, Madame de Quinsac and her son were supported by the highest of the French aristocracy. The mere names of the witnesses sufficed to indicate what an extraordinary medley there was. On Gérard's side these witnesses were his uncle, General de Bozonnet, and the Marquis de Morigny; whilst on Camille's they were the great banker Louvard, and Monferrand, the President of the Council and Minister of Finances. The quiet bravado which the latter displayed in thus supporting the bride after being compromised in her father's financial intrigues imparted a piquant touch of impudence to his triumph. And public curiosity was further stimulated by the circumstance that the nuptial blessing was to be given by Monseigneur Martha, Bishop of Persepolis, the Pope's political agent in France, and the apostle of the endeavours to win the Republic over to the Church by pretending to "rally" to it.

"But, I was mistaken," now resumed Massot with a sneer. "I said a really Parisian wedding, did I not? But in point of fact this wedding is a symbol. It's the apotheosis of the *bourgeoisie*, my dear fellow—the old nobility sacrificing one of its sons on the altar of the golden calf in order that the Divinity and the gendarmes, being the masters of France once more, may rid us of those scoundrelly Socialists!"

Then, again correcting himself, he added: "But I was forgetting. There are no more Socialists. Their head was cut off the other morning."

Duthil found this very funny. Then in a confidential way he remarked: "You know that the marriage

wasn't settled without a good deal of difficulty. . . . Have you read Sagnier's ignoble article this morning?"

"Yes, yes; but I knew it all before, everybody knew it."

Then in an undertone, understanding one another's slightest allusion, they went on chatting. It was only amidst a flood of tears and after a despairing struggle that Baroness Duvillard had consented to let her lover marry her daughter. And in doing so she had yielded to the sole desire of seeing Gérard rich and happy. She still regarded Camille with all the hatred of a defeated rival. Then, an equally painful contest had taken place at Madame de Quinsac's. The Countess had only overcome her revolt and consented to the marriage in order to save her son from the dangers which had threatened him since childhood; and the Marquis de Morigny had been so affected by her maternal abnegation, that in spite of all his anger he had resignedly agreed to be a witness, thus making a supreme sacrifice, that of his conscience, to the woman whom he had ever loved. And it was this frightful story that Sagnier — using transparent nicknames — had related in the "*Voix du Peuple*" that morning. He had even contrived to make it more horrid than it really was; for, as usual, he was badly informed, and he was naturally inclined to falsehood and invention, as by sending an ever thicker and more poisonous torrent from his sewer, he might, day by day, increase his paper's sales. Since Monferrand's victory had compelled him to leave the African Railways scandal on one side, he had fallen back on scandals in private

life, stripping whole families bare and pelting them with mud.

All at once Duthil and Massot were approached by Chaigneux, who, with his shabby frock coat badly buttoned, wore both a melancholy and busy air. "Well, Monsieur Massot," said he, "what about your article on Silviane? Is it settled? Will it go in?"

As Chaigneux was always for sale, always ready to serve as a valet, it had occurred to Duvillard to make use of him to ensure Silviane's success at the Comédie. He had handed this sorry deputy over to the young woman, who entrusted him with all manner of dirty work, and sent him scouring Paris in search of applauders and advertisements. His eldest daughter was not yet married, and never had his four women folk weighed more heavily on his hands. His life had become a perfect hell; they had ended by beating him, if he did not bring a thousand-franc note home on the first day of every month.

"My article!" Massot replied; "no, it surely won't go in, my dear deputy. Fonsègue says that it's written in too laudatory a style for the 'Globe.' He asked me if I were having a joke with the paper."

Chaigneux became livid. The article in question was one written in advance, from the society point of view, on the success which Silviane would achieve in "Polyeucte," that evening, at the Comédie. The journalist, in the hope of pleasing her, had even shown her his "copy"; and she, quite delighted, now relied upon finding the article in print in the most sober and solemn organ of the Parisian press.

"Good heavens! what will become of us?" mur-

mured the wretched Chaigneux. "It's absolutely necessary that the article should go in."

"Well, I'm quite agreeable. But speak to the governor yourself. He's standing yonder between Vignon and Dauvergne, the Minister of Public Instruction."

"Yes, I certainly will speak to him—but not here. By-and-by in the sacristy, during the procession. And I must also try to speak to Dauvergne, for our Silviane particularly wants him to be in the ministerial box this evening. Monferrand will be there; he promised Duvillard so."

Massot began to laugh, repeating the expression which had circulated through Paris directly after the actress's engagement: "The Silviane ministry. . . . Well, Dauvergne certainly owes that much to his god-mother!" said he.

Just then the little Princess de Harn, coming up like a gust of wind, broke in upon the three men. "I've no seat, you know!" she cried.

Duthil fancied that it was a question of finding her a well-placed chair in the church. "You mustn't count on me," he answered. "I've just had no end of trouble in stowing the Duchess de Boisemont away with her two daughters."

"Oh, but I'm talking of this evening's performance. Come, my dear Duthil, you really must find me a little corner in somebody's box. I shall die, I know I shall, if I can't applaud our delicious, our incomparable friend!"

Ever since setting Silviane down at her door on the previous day, Rosemonde had been overflowing with admiration for her.

"Oh! you won't find a single remaining seat, madame," declared Chaigneux, putting on an air of importance. "We have distributed everything. I have just been offered three hundred francs for a stall."

"That's true, there has been a fight even for the bracket seats, however badly they might be placed," Duthil resumed. "I am very sorry, but you must not count on me. . . . Duvillard is the only person who might take you in his box. He told me that he would reserve me a seat there. And so far, I think, there are only three of us, including his son. . . . Ask Hyacinthe by-and-by to procure you an invitation."

Rosemonde, whom Hyacinthe had so greatly bored that she had given him his dismissal, felt the irony of Duthil's suggestion. Nevertheless, she exclaimed with an air of delight: "Ah, yes! Hyacinthe can't refuse me that. Thanks for your information, my dear Duthil. You are very nice, you are; for you settle things gaily even when they are rather sad. . . . And don't forget, mind, that you have promised to teach me politics. Ah! politics, my dear fellow, I feel that nothing will ever impassion me as politics do!"

Then she left them, hustled several people, and in spite of the crush ended by installing herself in the front row.

"Ah! what a crank she is!" muttered Massot with an air of amusement.

Then, as Chaigneux darted towards magistrate Amadiou to ask him in the most obsequious way if he

had received his ticket, the journalist said to Duthil in a whisper: "By the way, my dear friend, is it true that Duvillard is going to launch his famous scheme for a Trans-Saharan railway? It would be a gigantic enterprise, a question of hundreds and hundreds of millions this time. . . . At the 'Globe' office yesterday evening, Fonsègue shrugged his shoulders and said it was madness, and would never come off!"

Duthil winked, and in a jesting way replied: "It's as good as done, my dear boy. Fonsègue will be kissing the governor's feet before another forty-eight hours are over."

Then he gaily gave the other to understand that golden manna would presently be raining down on the press and all faithful friends and willing helpers. Birds shake their feathers when the storm is over, and he, Duthil, was as spruce and lively, as joyous at the prospect of the presents he now expected, as if there had never been any African Railways scandal to upset him and make him turn pale with fright.

"The deuce!" muttered Massot, who had become serious. "So this affair here is more than a triumph: it's the promise of yet another harvest. Well, I'm no longer surprised at the crush of people."

At this moment the organs suddenly burst into a glorious hymn of greeting. The marriage procession was entering the church. A loud clamour had gone up from the crowd, which spread over the roadway of the Rue Royale and impeded the traffic there, while the *cortège* pompously ascended the steps in the bright sunshine. And it was now entering the edifice and advancing beneath the lofty, re-echoing vaults towards

the high altar which flared with candles, whilst on either hand crowded the congregation, the men on the right and the women on the left. They had all risen and stood there smiling, with necks outstretched and eyes glowing with curiosity.

First, in the rear of the magnificent beadle, came Camille, leaning on the arm of her father, Baron Duvillard, who wore a proud expression befitting a day of victory. Veiled with superb *point d'Alençon* falling from her diadem of orange blossom, gowned in pleated silk muslin over an underskirt of white satin, the bride looked so extremely happy, so radiant at having conquered, that she seemed almost pretty. Moreover, she held herself so upright that one could scarcely detect that her left shoulder was higher than her right.

Next came Gérard, giving his arm to his mother, the Countess de Quinsac, — he looking very handsome and courtly, as was proper, and she displaying impassive dignity in her gown of peacock-blue silk embroidered with gold and steel beads. But it was particularly Eve whom people wished to see, and every neck was craned forward when she appeared on the arm of General Bozonnet, the bridegroom's first witness and nearest male relative. She was gowned in "old rose" taffetas trimmed with Valenciennes of priceless value, and never had she looked younger, more deliciously fair. Yet her eyes betrayed her emotion, though she strove to smile; and her languid grace bespoke her widowhood, her compassionate surrender of the man she loved. Monferrand, the Marquis de Morigny, and banker Louvard, the three other witnesses, followed

the Baroness and General Bozonnet, each giving his arm to some lady of the family. A considerable sensation was caused by the appearance of Monferrand, who seemed on first-rate terms with himself, and jested familiarly with the lady he accompanied, a little brunette with a giddy air. Another who was noticed in the solemn, interminable procession was the bride's eccentric brother Hyacinthe, whose dress coat was of a cut never previously seen, with its tails broadly and symmetrically pleated.

When the affianced pair had taken their places before the prayer-stools, awaiting them, and the members of both families and the witnesses had installed themselves in the rear in large armchairs, all gilding and red velvet, the ceremony was performed with extraordinary pomp. The curé of the Madeleine officiated in person; and vocalists from the Grand Opera reinforced the choir, which chanted the high mass to the accompaniment of the organs, whence came a continuous hymn of glory. All possible luxury and magnificence were displayed, as if to turn this wedding into some public festivity, a great victory, an event marking the apogee of a class. Even the impudent bravado attaching to the loathsome private drama which lay behind it all, and which was known to everybody, added a touch of abominable grandeur to the ceremony. But the truculent spirit of superiority and domination which characterised the proceedings became most manifest when Monseigneur Martha appeared in surplice and stole to pronounce the blessing. Tall of stature, fresh of face, and faintly smiling, he had his wonted air of amiable sovereignty, and it

was with august unction that he pronounced the sacramental words, like some pontiff well pleased at reconciling the two great empires whose heirs he united. His address to the newly married couple was awaited with curiosity. It proved really marvellous, he himself triumphed in it. Was it not in that same church that he had baptised the bride's mother, that blond Eve, who was still so beautiful, that Jewess whom he himself had converted to the Catholic faith amidst the tears of emotion shed by all Paris society? Was it not there also that he had delivered his three famous addresses on the New Spirit, whence dated, to his thinking, the rout of science, the awakening of Christian spirituality, and that policy of rallying to the Republic which was to lead to its conquest?

So it was assuredly allowable for him to indulge in some delicate allusions, by way of congratulating himself on his work, now that he was marrying a poor scion of the old aristocracy to the five millions of that *bourgeoise* heiress, in whose person triumphed the class which had won the victory in 1789, and was now master of the land. The fourth estate, the duped, robbed people, alone had no place in those festivities. But by uniting the affianced pair before him in the bonds of wedlock, Monseigneur Martha sealed the new alliance, gave effect to the Pope's own policy, that stealthy effort of Jesuitical Opportunism which would take democracy, power and wealth to wife, in order to subdue and control them. When the prelate reached his peroration he turned towards Monferrand, who sat there smiling; and it was he, the Minister, whom he seemed to be addressing while he expressed the hope

that the newly married pair would ever lead a truly Christian life of humility and obedience in all fear of God, of whose iron hand he spoke as if it were that of some gendarme charged with maintaining the peace of the world. Everybody was aware that there was some diplomatic understanding between the Bishop and the Minister, some secret pact or other whereby both satisfied their passion for authority, their craving to insinuate themselves into everything and reign supreme; and thus when the spectators saw Monferand smiling in his somewhat sly, jovial way, they also exchanged smiles.

"Ah!" muttered Massot, who had remained near Duthil, "how amused old Justus Steinberger would be, if he were here to see his granddaughter marrying the last of the Quinsacs!"

"But these marriages are quite the thing, quite the fashion, my dear fellow," the deputy replied. "The Jews and the Christians, the *bourgeois* and the nobles, do quite right to come to an understanding, so as to found a new aristocracy. An aristocracy is needed, you know, for otherwise we should be swept away by the masses."

None the less Massot continued sneering at the idea of what a grimace Justus Steinberger would have made if he had heard Monseigneur Martha. It was rumoured in Paris that although the old Jew banker had ceased all intercourse with his daughter Eve since her conversion, he took a keen interest in everything she was reported to do or say, as if he were more than ever convinced that she would prove an avenging and dissolving agent among those Christians, whose de-

struction was asserted to be the dream of his race. If he had failed in his hope of overcoming Duvillard by giving her to him as a wife, he doubtless now consoled himself with thinking of the extraordinary fortune to which his blood had attained, by mingling with that of the harsh, old-time masters of his race, to whose corruption it gave a finishing touch. Therein perhaps lay that final Jewish conquest of the world of which people sometimes talked.

A last triumphal strain from the organ brought the ceremony to an end; whereupon the two families and the witnesses passed into the sacristy, where the acts were signed. And forthwith the great congratulatory procession commenced.

The bride and bridegroom at last stood side by side in the lofty but rather dim room, panelled with oak. How radiant with delight was Camille at the thought that it was all over, that she had triumphed and married that handsome man of high lineage, after wresting him with so much difficulty from one and all, her mother especially! She seemed to have grown taller. Deformed, swarthy, and ugly though she was, she drew herself up exultingly, whilst scores and scores of women, friends or acquaintances, scrambled and rushed upon her, pressing her hands or kissing her, and addressing her in words of ecstasy. Gérard, who rose both head and shoulders above his bride, and looked all the nobler and stronger beside one of such puny figure, shook hands and smiled like some Prince Charming, who good-naturedly allowed himself to be loved. Meanwhile, the relatives of the newly wedded pair, though they were drawn up in one line, formed

two distinct groups past which the crowd pushed and surged with arms outstretched. Duvillard received the congratulations offered him as if he were some king well pleased with his people; whilst Eve, with a supreme effort, put on an enchanting mien, and answered one and all with scarcely a sign of the sobs which she was forcing back. Then, on the other side of the bridal pair, Madame de Quinsac stood between General de Bozonnet and the Marquis de Morigny. Very dignified, in fact almost haughty, she acknowledged most of the salutations addressed to her with a mere nod, giving her little withered hand only to those people with whom she was well acquainted. A sea of strange countenances encompassed her, and now and again when some particularly murky wave rolled by, a wave of men whose faces bespoke all the crimes of money-mongering, she and the Marquis exchanged glances of deep sadness. This tide continued sweeping by for nearly half an hour; and such was the number of those who wanted to shake hands with the bridal pair and their relatives, that the latter soon felt their arms ache.

Meantime, some folks lingered in the sacristy; little groups collected, and gay chatter rang out. Monferrand was immediately surrounded. Massot pointed out to Duthil how eagerly Public Prosecutor Lehmann rushed upon the Minister to pay him court. They were immediately joined by investigating magistrate Amadieu. And even M. de Larombière, the judge, approached Monferrand, although he hated the Republic, and was an intimate friend of the Quinsacs. But then obedience and obsequiousness were necessary

on the part of the magistracy, for it was dependent on those in power, who alone could give advancement, and appoint even as they dismissed. As for Lehmann, it was alleged that he had rendered assistance to Monferrand by spiriting away certain documents connected with the African Railways affair, whilst with regard to the smiling and extremely Parisian Amadiou, was it not to him that the government was indebted for Salvat's head?

"You know," muttered Massot, "they've all come to be thanked for guillotining that man yesterday. Monferrand owes that wretched fellow a fine taper; for in the first place his bomb prolonged the life of the Barroux ministry, and later on it made Monferrand prime minister, as a strong-handed man was particularly needed to strangle Anarchism. What a contest, eh? Monferrand on one side and Salvat on the other. It was all bound to end in a head being cut off; one was wanted. . . . Ah! just listen, they are talking of it."

This was true. As the three functionaries of the law drew near to pay their respects to the all-powerful Minister, they were questioned by lady friends whose curiosity had been roused by what they had read in the newspapers. Thereupon Amadiou, whom duty had taken to the execution, and who was proud of his own importance, and determined to destroy what he called "the legend of Salvat's heroic death," declared that the scoundrel had shown no true courage at all. His pride alone had kept him on his feet. Fright had so shaken and choked him that he had virtually been dead before the fall of the knife.

"Ah! that's true!" cried Duthil. "I was there myself."

Massot, however, pulled him by the arm, quite indignant at such an assertion, although as a rule he cared a rap for nothing. "You couldn't see anything, my dear fellow," said he; "Salvat died very bravely. It's really stupid to continue throwing mud at that poor devil even when he's dead."

However, the idea that Salvat had died like a coward was too pleasing a one to be rejected. It was, so to say, a last sacrifice deposited at Monferrand's feet with the object of propitiating him. He still smiled in his peaceful way, like a good-natured man who is stern only when necessity requires it. And he showed great amiability towards the three judicial functionaries, and thanked them for the bravery with which they had accomplished their painful duty to the very end. On the previous day, after the execution, he had obtained a formidable majority in the Chamber on a somewhat delicate matter of policy. Order reigned, said he, and all was for the very best in France. Then, on seeing Vignon—who like a cool gamester had made a point of attending the wedding in order to show people that he was superior to fortune—the Minister detained him, and made much of him, partly as a matter of tactics, for in spite of everything he could not help fearing that the future might belong to that young fellow, who showed himself so intelligent and cautious. When a mutual friend informed them that Barroux' health was now so bad that the doctors had given him up as lost, they both began to express their compassion. Poor Barroux!

He had never recovered from that vote of the Chamber which had overthrown him. He had been sinking from day to day, stricken to the heart by his country's ingratitude, dying of that abominable charge of money-mongering and thieving; he who was so upright and so loyal, who had devoted his whole life to the Republic! But then, as Monferrand repeated, one should never confess. The public can't understand such a thing.

At this moment Duvillard, in some degree relinquishing his paternal duties, came to join the others, and the Minister then had to share the honours of triumph with him. For was not this banker the master? Was he not money personified—money, which is the only stable, everlasting force, far above all ephemeral tenure of power, such as attaches to those ministerial portfolios which pass so rapidly from hand to hand? Monferrand reigned, but he would pass away, and a like fate would some day fall on Vignon, who had already had a warning that one could not govern unless the millions of the financial world were on one's side. So was not the only real triumpher himself, the Baron—he who laid out five millions of francs on buying a scion of the aristocracy for his daughter, he who was the personification of the sovereign *bourgeoisie*, who controlled public fortune, and was determined to part with nothing, even were he attacked with bombs? All these festivities really centred in himself, he alone sat down to the banquet, leaving merely the crumbs from his table to the lowly, those wretched toilers who had been so cleverly duped at the time of the Revolution.

That African 'Railways affair was already but so much ancient history, buried, spirited away by a parliamentary commission. All who had been compromised in it, the Duthils, the Chaigneux, the Fonsègues and others, could now laugh merrily. They had been delivered from their nightmare by Monferrand's strong fist, and raised by Duvillard's triumph. Even Sagnier's ignoble article and miry revelations in the "*Voix du Peuple*" were of no real account, and could be treated with a shrug of the shoulders, for the public had been so saturated with denunciation and slander that it was now utterly weary of all noisy scandal. The only thing which aroused interest was the rumour that Duvillard's big affair of the Trans-Saharan Railway was soon to be launched, that millions of money would be handled, and that some of them would rain down upon faithful friends.

Whilst Duvillard was conversing in a friendly way with Monferrand and Dauvergne, the Minister of Public Instruction, who had joined them, Massot encountered Fonsègue, his editor, and said to him in an undertone: "Duthil has just assured me that the Trans-Saharan business is ready, and that they mean to chance it with the Chamber. They declare that they are certain of success."

Fonsègue, however, was sceptical on the point. "It's impossible," said he; "they won't dare to begin again so soon."

Although he spoke in this fashion, the news had made him grave. He had lately had such a terrible fright through his imprudence in the African Railways affair, that he had vowed he would take every precaution in

future. Still, this did not mean that he would refuse to participate in matters of business. The best course was to wait and study them, and then secure a share in all that seemed profitable. In the present instance he felt somewhat worried. However, whilst he stood there watching the group around Duvillard and the two ministers, he suddenly perceived Chaigneux, who, flitting hither and thither, was still beating up applauders for that evening's performance. He sang Silviane's praises in every key, predicted a most tremendous success, and did his very best to stimulate curiosity. At last he approached Dauvergne, and with his long figure bent double exclaimed: "My dear Minister, I have a particular request to make to you on the part of a very charming person, whose victory will not be complete this evening if you do not condescend to favour her with your vote."

Dauvergne, a tall, fair, good-looking man, whose blue eyes smiled behind his glasses, listened to Chaigneux with an affable air. He was proving a great success at the Ministry of Public Instruction, although he knew nothing of University matters. However, like a real Parisian of Dijon, as people called him, he was possessed of some tact and skill, gave entertainments at which his young and charming wife outshone all others, and passed as being quite an enlightened friend of writers and artists. Silviane's engagement at the Comédie, which so far was his most notable achievement, and which would have shaken the position of any other minister, had by a curious chance rendered him popular. It was regarded as something original and amusing.

On understanding that Chaigneux simply wished to make sure of his presence at the Comédie that evening, he became yet more affable. "Why, certainly, I shall be there, my dear deputy," he replied. "When one has such a charming god-daughter one mustn't forsake her in a moment of danger."

At this Monferrand, who had been lending ear, turned round. "And tell her," said he, "that I shall be there, too. She may therefore rely on having two more friends in the house."

Thereupon Duvillard, quite enraptured, his eyes glistening with emotion and gratitude, bowed to the two ministers as if they had granted him some never-to-be-forgotten favour.

When Chaigneux, on his side also, had returned thanks with a low bow, he happened to perceive Fonsègue, and forthwith he darted towards him and led him aside. "Ah! my dear colleague," he declared, "it is absolutely necessary that this matter should be settled. I regard it as of supreme importance."

"What are you speaking of?" inquired Fonsègue, much surprised.

"Why, of Massot's article, which you won't insert."

Thereupon, the director of the "Globe" plumply declared that he could not insert the article. He talked of his paper's dignity and gravity; and declared that the lavishing of such fulsome praise upon a hussy — yes, a mere hussy, in a journal whose exemplary morality and austerity had cost him so much labour, would seem monstrous and degrading. Personally, he did not care a fig about it; if Silviane chose

to make an exhibition of herself, well, he would be there to see; but the "Globe" was sacred.

Disconcerted and almost tearful, Chaigneux nevertheless renewed his attempt. "Come, my dear colleague," said he, "pray make a little effort for my sake. If the article isn't inserted, Duvillard will think that it is my fault. And you know that I really need his help. My eldest daughter's marriage has again been postponed, and I hardly know where to turn." Then perceiving that his own misfortunes in no wise touched Fonsègue, he added: "And do it for your own sake, my dear colleague, your own sake. For when all is said Duvillard knows what is in the article, and it is precisely because it is so favourable a one that he wishes to see it in the 'Globe.' Think it over; if the article isn't published, he will certainly turn his back on you."

For a moment Fonsègue remained silent. Was he thinking of the colossal Trans-Saharan enterprise? Was he reflecting that it would be hard to quarrel at such a moment and miss his own share in the coming distribution of millions among faithful friends? Perhaps so; however, the idea that it would be more prudent to await developments gained the day with him. "No, no," he said, "I can't, it's a matter of conscience."

In the mean time congratulations were still being tendered to the newly wedded couple. It seemed as if all Paris were passing through the sacristy; there were ever the same smiles and the same hand shakes. Gérard, Camille and their relatives, however weary they might feel, were forced to retain an air of delight

while they stood there against the wall, pent up by the crowd. The heat was now becoming unbearable, and a cloud of dust arose as when some big flock goes by.

All at once little Princess de Harn, who had hitherto lingered nobody knew where, sprang out of the throng, flung her arms around Camille, kissed even Eve, and then kept Gérard's hand in her own while paying him extraordinary compliments. Then, on perceiving Hyacinthe, she took possession of him and carried him off into a corner. "I say," she exclaimed, "I have a favour to ask you."

The young man was wonderfully silent that day. His sister's wedding seemed to him a contemptible ceremony, the most vulgar that one could imagine. So here, thought he, was another pair accepting the horrid sexual law by which the absurdity of the world was perpetuated! For his part, he had decided that he would witness the proceedings in rigid silence, with a haughty air of disapproval. When Rosemonde spoke to him, he looked at her rather nervously, for he was glad that she had forsaken him for Duthil, and feared some fresh caprice on her part. At last, opening his mouth for the first time that day, he replied: "Oh, as a friend, you know, I will grant you whatever favour you like."

Forthwith the Princess explained that she would surely die if she did not witness the *début* of her dear friend Silviane, of whom she had become such a passionate admirer. So she begged the young man to prevail on his father to give her a seat in his box, as she knew that one was left there.

Hyacinthe smiled. "Oh, willingly, my dear," said he; "I'll warn papa, there will be a seat for you."

Then, as the procession of guests at last drew to an end and the vestry began to empty, the bridal pair and their relatives were able to go off through the chattering throng, which still lingered about to bow to them and scrutinise them once more.

Gérard and Camille were to leave for an estate which Duvillard possessed in Normandy, directly after lunch. This repast, served at the princely mansion of the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, provided an opportunity for fresh display. The dining-room on the first floor had been transformed into a buffet, where reigned the greatest abundance and the most wonderful sumptuousness. Quite a reception too was held in the drawing-rooms, the large red *salon*, the little blue and silver *salon* and all the others, whose doors stood wide open. Although it had been arranged that only family friends should be invited, there were quite three hundred people present. The ministers had excused themselves, alleging that the weighty cares of public business required their presence elsewhere. But the magistrates, the deputies and the leading journalists who had attended the wedding were again assembled together. And in that throng of hungry folks, longing for some of the spoils of Duvillard's new venture, the people who felt most out of their element were Madame de Quinsac's few guests, whom General de Bozonnet and the Marquis de Morigny had seated on a sofa in the large red *salon*, which they did not quit.

Eve, who for her part felt quite overcome, both her

moral and physical strength being exhausted, had seated herself in the little blue and silver drawing-room, which, with her passion for flowers, she had transformed into an arbour of roses. She would have fallen had she remained standing, the very floor had seemed to sink beneath her feet. Nevertheless, whenever a guest approached her she managed to force a smile, and appear beautiful and charming. Unlooked-for help at last came to her in the person of Monseigneur Martha, who had graciously honoured the lunch with his presence. He took an armchair near her, and began to talk to her in his amiable, caressing way. He was doubtless well aware of the frightful anguish which wrung the poor woman's heart, for he showed himself quite fatherly, eager to comfort her. She, however, talked on like some inconsolable widow bent on renouncing the world for God, who alone could bring her peace. Then, as the conversation turned on the Asylum for the Invalids of Labour, she declared that she was resolved to take her presidency very seriously, and, in fact, would exclusively devote herself to it, in the future.

"And as we are speaking of this, Monseigneur," said she, "I would even ask you to give me some advice. . . . I shall need somebody to help me, and I thought of securing the services of a priest whom I much admire, Monsieur l'Abbé Pierre Froment."

At this the Bishop became grave and embarrassed; but Princess Rosemonde, who was passing by with Duthil, had overheard the Baroness, and drawing near with her wonted impetuosity, she exclaimed: "Abbé Pierre Froment! Oh! I forgot to tell you, my dear,

that I met him going about in jacket and trousers! And I've been told too that he cycles in the Bois with some creature or other. Isn't it true, Duthil, that we met him?"

The deputy bowed and smiled, whilst Eve clasped her hands in amazement. "Is it possible! A priest who was all charitable fervour, who had the faith and passion of an apostle!"

Thereupon Monseigneur intervened: "Yes, yes, great sorrows occasionally fall upon the Church. I heard of the madness of the unhappy man you speak of. I even thought it my duty to write to him, but he left my letter unanswered. I should so much have liked to stifle such a scandal! But there are abominable forces which we cannot always overcome; and so a day or two ago the archbishop was obliged to put him under interdict. . . . You must choose somebody else, madame."

It was quite a disaster. Eve gazed at Rosemonde and Duthil, without daring to ask them for particulars, but wondering what creature could have been so audacious as to turn a priest from the path of duty. She must assuredly be some shameless demented woman! And it seemed to Eve as if this crime gave a finishing touch to her own misfortune. With a wave of the arm, which took in all the luxury around her, the roses steeping her in perfume, and the crush of guests around the buffet, she murmured: "Ah! decidedly there's nothing but corruption left; one can no longer rely on anybody!"

Whilst this was going on, Camille happened to be alone in her own room getting ready to leave the house

with Gérard. And all at once her brother Hyacinthe joined her there. "Ah! it's you, youngster!" she exclaimed. "Well, make haste if you want to kiss me, for I'm off now, thank goodness!"

He kissed her as she suggested, and then in a doctoral way replied: "I thought you had more self-command. The delight you have been showing all this morning quite disgusts me."

A quiet glance of contempt was her only answer. However, he continued: "You know very well that she'll take your Gérard from you again, directly you come back to Paris."

At this Camille's cheeks turned white and her eyes flared. She stepped towards her brother with clenched fists: "She! you say that she will take him from me!"

The "she" they referred to was their own mother.

"Listen, my boy! I'll kill her first!" continued Camille. "Ah, no! she needn't hope for that. I shall know how to keep the man that belongs to me. . . . And as for you, keep your spite to yourself, for I know you, remember; you are a mere child and a fool!"

He recoiled as if a viper were rearing its sharp, slender black head before him; and having always feared her, he thought it best to beat a retreat.

While the last guests were rushing upon the buffet and finishing the pillage there, the bridal pair took their leave, before driving off to the railway station. General de Bozonnet had joined a group in order to vent his usual complaints about compulsory military service, and the Marquis de Morigny was obliged to

fetch him at the moment when the Countess de Quinsac was kissing her son and daughter-in-law. The old lady trembled with so much emotion that the Marquis respectfully ventured to sustain her. Meantime, Hyacinthe had started in search of his father, and at last found him near a window with the tottering Chaigneux, whom he was violently upbraiding, for Fonsègue's conscientious scruples had put him in a fury. Indeed, if Massot's article should not be inserted in the "Globe," Silviane might lay all the blame upon him, the Baron, and wreak further punishment upon him. However, upon being summoned by his son he had to don his triumphal air once more, kiss his daughter on the forehead, shake hands with his son-in-law, jest and wish them both a pleasant journey. Then Eve, near whom Monseigneur Martha had remained, smiling, in her turn had to say farewell. In this she evinced touching bravery; her determination to remain beautiful and charming until the very end lent her sufficient strength to show herself both gay and motherly.

She took hold of the slightly quivering hand which Gérard proffered with some embarrassment, and ventured to retain it for a moment in her own, in a good-hearted, affectionate way, instinct with all the heroism of renunciation. "Good by, Gérard," she said, "keep in good health, be happy." Then turning to Camille she kissed her on both cheeks, while Monseigneur Martha sat looking at them with an air of indulgent sympathy. They wished each other "Au revoir," but their voices trembled, and their eyes in meeting gleamed like swords; in the same way as beneath the kisses.

they had exchanged they had felt each other's teeth. Ah! how it enraged Camille to see her mother still so beautiful and fascinating in spite of age and grief! And for Eve how great the torture of beholding her daughter's youth, that youth which had overcome her, and was for ever wresting love from within her reach! No forgiveness was possible between them; they would still hate one another even in the family tomb, where some day they would sleep side by side.

All the same, that evening Baroness Duvillard excused herself from attending the performance of "*Polyeucte*" at the *Comédie Française*. She felt very tired and wished to go to bed early, said she. As a matter of fact she wept on her pillow all night long. Thus the Baron's stage-box on the first balcony tier contained only himself, Hyacinthe, Duthil, and little Princess de Harn.

At nine o'clock there was a full house, one of the brilliant chattering houses peculiar to great dramatic solemnities. All the society people who had marched through the sacristy of the Madeleine that morning were now assembled at the theatre, again feverish with curiosity, and on the lookout for the unexpected. One recognised the same faces and the same smiles; the women acknowledged one another's presence with little signs of intelligence, the men understood each other at a word, a gesture. One and all had kept the appointment, the ladies with bared shoulders, the gentlemen with flowers in their button-holes. Fonsègue occupied the "*Globe's*" box, with two friendly families. Little Massot had his customary seat in the stalls. Amadieu, who was a faithful patron of the *Comédie*,

was also to be seen there, as well as General de Bozonnet and Public Prosecutor Lehmann. The man who was most looked at, however, on account of his scandalous article that morning, was Sagnier, the terrible Sagnier, looking bloated and apoplectical. Then there was Chaigneux, who had kept merely a modest bracket-seat for himself, and who scoured the passages, and climbed to every tier, for the last time preaching enthusiasm. Finally, the two ministers Monferrand and Dauvergne appeared in the box facing Duvillard's; whereupon many knowing smiles were exchanged, for everybody was aware that these personages had come to help on the success of the *débutante*.

On the latter point there had still been unfavourable rumours only the previous day. Sagnier had declared that the *début* of such a notorious harlot as Silviane at the Comédie Française, in such a part too as that of "Pauline," which was one of so much moral loftiness, could only be regarded as an impudent insult to public decency. The whole press, moreover, had long been up in arms against the young woman's extraordinary caprice. But then the affair had been talked of for six months past, so that Paris had grown used to the idea of seeing Silviane at the Comédie. And now it flocked thither with the one idea of being entertained. Before the curtain rose one could tell by the very atmosphere of the house that the audience was a jovial, good-humoured one, bent on enjoying itself, and ready to applaud should it find itself at all pleased.

The performance really proved extraordinary. When Silviane, chastely robed, made her appearance in the first act, the house was quite astonished by her virginal

face, her innocent-looking mouth, and her eyes beaming with immaculate candour. Then, although the manner in which she had understood her part at first amazed people, it ended by charming them. From the moment of confiding in "Stratonice," from the moment of relating her dream, she turned "Pauline" into a soaring mystical creature, some saint, as it were, such as one sees in stained-glass windows, carried along by a Wagnerian Brunhilda riding the clouds. It was a thoroughly ridiculous conception of the part, contrary to reason and truth alike. Still, it only seemed to interest people the more, partly on account of mysticism being the fashion, and partly on account of the contrast between Silviane's assumed candour and real depravity. Her success increased from act to act, and some slight hissing which was attributed to Sagnier only helped to make the victory more complete. Monferrand and Dauvergne, as the newspapers afterwards related, gave the signal for applause; and the whole house joined in it, partly from amusement and partly perhaps in a spirit of irony.

During the interval between the fourth and fifth acts there was quite a procession of visitors to Duvillard's box, where the greatest excitement prevailed. Duthil, however, after absenting himself for a moment, came back to say: "You remember our influential critic, the one whom I brought to dinner at the Café Anglais? Well, he's repeating to everybody that 'Pauline' is merely a little *bourgeoise*, and is not transformed by the heavenly grace until the very finish of the piece. To turn her into a holy virgin from the outset simply kills the part, says he."

"Pooh!" repeated Duvillard, "let him argue if he likes, it will be all the more advertisement. . . . The important point is to get Massot's article inserted in the 'Globe' to-morrow morning."

On this point, unfortunately, the news was by no means good. Chaigneux, who had gone in search of Fonsègue, declared that the latter still hesitated in the matter in spite of Silviane's success, which he declared to be ridiculous. Thereupon, the Baron became quite angry. "Go and tell Fonsègue," he exclaimed, "that I insist on it, and that I shall remember what he does."

Meantime Princess Rosemonde was becoming quite delirious with enthusiasm. "My dear Hyacinthe," she pleaded, "please take me to Silviane's dressing-room; I can't wait, I really must go and kiss her."

"But we'll all go!" cried Duvillard, who heard her entreaty.

The passages were crowded, and there were people even on the stage. Moreover, when the party reached the door of Silviane's dressing-room, they found it shut. When the Baron knocked at it, a dresser replied that madame begged the gentlemen to wait a moment.

"Oh! a woman may surely go in," replied Rosemonde, hastily slipping through the doorway. "And you may come, Hyacinthe," she added; "there can be no objection to you."

Silviane was very hot, and a dresser was wiping her perspiring shoulders when Rosemonde darted forward and kissed her. Then they chatted together amidst the heat and glare from the gas and the intoxicating

perfumes of all the flowers which were heaped up in the little room. Finally, Hyacinthe heard them promise to see one another after the performance, Silviane even inviting Rosemonde to drink a cup of tea with her at her house. At this the young man smiled complacently, and said to the actress: "Your carriage is waiting for you at the corner of the Rue Montpensier, is it not? Well, I'll take the Princess to it. That will be the simpler plan, you can both go off together!"

"Oh! how good of you," cried Rosemonde; "it's agreed."

Just then the door was opened, and the men, being admitted, began to pour forth their congratulations. However, they had to regain their seats in all haste so as to witness the fifth act. This proved quite a triumph, the whole house bursting into applause when Silviane spoke the famous line, "I see, I know, I believe, I am undeceived," with the rapturous enthusiasm of a holy martyr ascending to heaven. Nothing could have been more soul-like, it was said. And so when the performers were called before the curtain, Paris bestowed an ovation on that virgin of the stage, who, as Sagnier put it, knew so well how to act depravity at home.

Accompanied by Duthil, Duvillard at once went behind the scenes in order to fetch Silviane, while Hyacinthe escorted Rosemonde to the brougham waiting at the corner of the Rue Montpensier. Having helped her into it, the young man stood by, waiting. And he seemed to grow quite merry when his father came up with Silviane, and was stopped by her, just as, in his turn, he wished to get into the carriage.

"There's no room for you, my dear fellow," said she. "I've a friend with me."

Rosemonde's little smiling face then peered forth from the depths of the brougham. And the Baron remained there open-mouthed while the vehicle swiftly carried the two women away!

"Well, what would you have, my dear fellow?" said Hyacinthe, by way of explanation to Duthil, who also seemed somewhat amazed by what had happened. "Rosemonde was worrying my life out, and so I got rid of her by packing her off with Silviane."

Duvillard was still standing on the pavement and still looking dazed when Chaigneux, who was going home quite tired out, recognised him, and came up to say that Fonsègue had thought the matter over, and that Massot's article would be duly inserted. In the passages, too, there had been a deal of talk about the famous Trans-Saharan project.

Then Hyacinthe led his father away, trying to comfort him like a sensible friend, who regarded woman as a base and impure creature. "Let's go home to bed," said he. "As that article is to appear, you can take it to her to-morrow. She will see you, sure enough."

Thereupon they lighted cigars, and now and again exchanging a few words, took their way up the Avenue de l'Opéra, which at that hour was deserted and dismal. Meantime, above the slumbering houses of Paris the breeze wafted a prolonged sigh, the plaint, as it were, of an expiring world.

III

THE GOAL OF LABOUR

EVER since the execution of Salvat, Guillaume had become extremely taciturn. He seemed worried and absent-minded. He would work for hours at the manufacture of that dangerous powder of which he alone knew the formula, and the preparation of which was such a delicate matter that he would allow none to assist him. Then, at other times he would go off, and return tired out by some long solitary ramble. He remained very gentle at home, and strove to smile there. But whenever anybody spoke to him he started as if suddenly called back from dreamland.

Pierre imagined his brother had relied too much upon his powers of renunciation, and found the loss of Marie unbearable. Was it not some thought of her that haunted him now that the date fixed for the marriage drew nearer and nearer? One evening, therefore, Pierre ventured to speak out, again offering to leave the house and disappear.

But at the first words he uttered Guillaume stopped him, and affectionately replied: "Marie? Oh! I love her, I love her too well to regret what I have done. No, no! you only bring me happiness, I derive all my strength and courage from you now that I know you are both happy. . . . And I assure you that you are

mistaken, there is nothing at all the matter with me; my work absorbs me, perhaps, but that is all."

That same evening he managed to cast his gloom aside, and displayed delightful gaiety. During dinner he inquired if the upholsterer would soon call to arrange the two little rooms which Marie was to occupy with her husband over the workroom. The young woman, who since her marriage with Pierre had been decided had remained waiting with smiling patience, thereupon told Guillaume what it was she desired — first some hangings of red cotton stuff, then some polished pine furniture which would enable her to imagine she was in the country, and finally a carpet on the floor, because a carpet seemed to her the height of luxury. She laughed as she spoke, and Guillaume laughed with her in a gay and fatherly way. His good spirits brought much relief to Pierre, who concluded that he must have been mistaken in his surmises.

On the very morrow, however, Guillaume relapsed into a dreamy state. And so disquietude again came upon Pierre, particularly when he noticed that Mère-Grand also seemed to be unusually grave and silent. Not daring to address her, he tried to extract some information from his nephews, but neither Thomas nor François nor Antoine knew anything. Each of them quietly devoted his time to his work, respecting and worshipping his father, but never questioning him about his plans or enterprises. Whatever he might choose to do could only be right and good; and they, his sons, were ready to do the same and help him at the very first call, without pausing to inquire

into his purpose. It was plain, however, that he kept them apart from anything at all perilous, that he retained all responsibility for himself, and that Mère-Grand alone was his *confidante*, the one whom he consulted and to whom he perhaps listened. Pierre therefore renounced his hope of learning anything from the sons, and directed his attention to the old lady, whose rigid gravity worried him the more as she and Guillaume frequently had private chats in the room she occupied upstairs. They shut themselves up there all alone, and remained together for hours without the faintest sound coming from the seemingly lifeless chamber.

One day, however, Pierre caught sight of Guillaume as he came out of it, carrying a little valise which appeared to be very heavy. And Pierre thereupon remembered both his brother's powder, one pound weight of which would have sufficed to destroy a cathedral, and the destructive engine which he had purposed bestowing upon France in order that she might be victorious over all other nations, and become the one great initiatory and liberative power. Pierre remembered too that the only person besides himself who knew his brother's secret was Mère-Grand, who, at the time when Guillaume was fearing some perquisition on the part of the police, had long slept upon the cartridges of the terrible explosive. But now why was Guillaume removing all the powder which he had been preparing for some time past? As this question occurred to Pierre, a sudden suspicion, a vague dread, came upon him, and gave him strength to ask his brother: "Have you reason to fear anything, since you won't keep

things here? If they embarrass you, they can all be deposited at my house, nobody will make a search there."

Guillaume, whom these words astonished, gazed at Pierre fixedly, and then replied: "Yes, I have learnt that the arrests and perquisitions have begun afresh since that poor devil was guillotined; for they are in terror at the thought that some despairing fellow may avenge him. Moreover, it is hardly prudent to keep destructive agents of such great power here. I prefer to deposit them in a safe place. But not at Neuilly — oh! no indeed! they are not a present for you, brother." Guillaume spoke with outward calmness; and if he had started with surprise at the first moment, it had been scarcely perceptible.

"So everything is ready?" Pierre resumed. "You will soon be handing your engine of destruction over to the Minister of War, I presume?"

A gleam of hesitation appeared in the depths of Guillaume's eyes, and he was for a moment about to tell a falsehood. However, he ended by replying: "No, I have renounced that intention. I have another idea."

He spoke these last words with so much energy and decision that Pierre did not dare to question him further, to ask him, for instance, what that other idea might be. From that moment, however, he quivered with anxious expectancy. From hour to hour Mère-Grand's lofty silence and Guillaume's rapt, energetic face seemed to tell him that some huge and terrifying scheme had come into being, and was growing and threatening the whole of Paris.

One afternoon, just as Thomas was about to repair to the Grandidier works, some one came to Guillaume's with the news that old Toussaint, the workman, had been stricken with a fresh attack of paralysis. Thomas thereupon decided that he would call upon the poor fellow on his way, for he held him in esteem and wished to ascertain if he could render him any help. Pierre expressed a desire to accompany his nephew, and they started off together about four o'clock.

On entering the one room which the Toussaints occupied, the room where they ate and slept, the visitors found the mechanician seated on a low chair near the table. He looked half dead, as if struck by lightning. It was a case of hemiplegia, which had paralysed the whole of his right side, his right leg and right arm, and had also spread to his face in such wise that he could no longer speak. The only sound he could raise was an incomprehensible guttural grunt. His mouth was drawn to the right, and his once round, good-natured-looking face, with tanned skin and bright eyes, had been twisted into a frightful mask of anguish. At fifty years of age, the unhappy man was utterly done for. His unkempt beard was as white as that of an octogenarian, and his knotty limbs, preyed upon by toil, were henceforth dead. Only his eyes remained alive, and they travelled around the room, going from one to another. By his side, eager to do what she could for him, was his wife, who remained stout even when she had little to eat, and still showed herself active and clear-headed, however great her misfortunes.

"It's a friendly visit, Toussaint," said she. "It's Monsieur Thomas who has come to see you with Monsieur l'Abbé." Then quietly correcting herself she added: "With Monsieur Pierre, his uncle. You see that you are not yet forsaken."

Toussaint wished to speak, but his fruitless efforts only brought two big tears to his eyes. Then he gazed at his visitors with an expression of indescribable woe, his jaws trembling convulsively.

"Don't put yourself out," repeated his wife. "The doctor told you that it would do you no good."

At the moment of entering the room, Pierre had already noticed two persons who had risen from their chairs and drawn somewhat on one side. And now to his great surprise he recognised that they were Madame Théodore and Céline, who were both decently clad, and looked as if they led a life of comfort. On hearing of Toussaint's misfortune they had come to see him, like good-hearted creatures, who, on their own side, had experienced the most cruel suffering. Pierre, on noticing that they now seemed to be beyond dire want, remembered what he had heard of the wonderful sympathy lavished on the child after her father's execution, the many presents and donations offered her, and the generous proposals that had been made to adopt her. These last had ended in her being adopted by a former friend of Salvat, who had sent her to school again, pending the time when she might be apprenticed to some trade, while, on the other hand, Madame Théodore had been placed as a nurse in a convalescent home. In such wise both had been saved.

When Pierre drew near to little Céline in order to kiss her, Madame Théodore told her to thank Monsieur l'Abbé — for so she still respectfully called him — for all that he had previously done for her. "It was you who brought us happiness, Monsieur l'Abbé," said she. "And that's a thing one can never forget. I'm always telling Céline to remember you in her prayers."

"And so, my child, you are now going to school again," said Pierre.

"Oh yes, Monsieur l'Abbé, and I'm well pleased at it. Besides, we no longer lack anything." Then, however, sudden emotion came over the girl, and she stammered with a sob: "Ah! if poor papa could only see us!"

Madame Théodore, meanwhile, had begun to take leave of Madame Toussaint. "Well, good by, we must go," said she. "What has happened to you is very sad, and we wanted to tell you how much it grieved us. The worry is that when misfortune falls on one, courage isn't enough to set things right. . . . Céline, come and kiss your uncle. . . . My poor brother, I hope you'll get back the use of your legs as soon as possible."

They kissed the paralysed man on the cheeks, and then went off. Toussaint had looked at them with his keen and still intelligent eyes, as if he longed to participate in the life and activity into which they were returning. And a jealous thought came to his wife, who usually was so placid and good-natured. "Ah! my poor old man!" said she, after propping him up with a pillow, "those two are luckier than

we are. Everything succeeds with them since that madman, Salvat, had his head cut off. They're provided for. They've plenty of bread on the shelf."

Then, turning towards Pierre and Thomas, she continued: "We others are done for, you know, we're down in the mud, with no hope of getting out of it. But what would you have? My poor husband hasn't been guillotined, he's done nothing but work his whole life long; and now, you see, that's the end of him, he's like some old animal, no longer good for anything."

Having made her visitors sit down she next answered their compassionate questions. The doctor had called twice already, and had promised to restore the unhappy man's power of speech, and perhaps enable him to crawl round the room with the help of a stick. But as for ever being able to resume real work that must not be expected. And so what was the use of living on? Toussaint's eyes plainly declared that he would much rather die at once. When a workman can no longer work and no longer provide for his wife he is ripe for the grave.

"Savings indeed!" Madame Toussaint resumed. "There are folks who ask if we have any savings. . . . Well, we had nearly a thousand francs in the Savings Bank when Toussaint had his first attack. And some people don't know what a lot of prudence one needs to put by such a sum; for, after all, we're not savages, we have to allow ourselves a little enjoyment now and then, a good dish and a good bottle of wine. . . . Well, what with five months of enforced idleness, and the medicines, and the underdone meat that was ordered, we got to the end of our thousand francs;

and now that it's all begun again we're not likely to taste any more bottled wine or roast mutton."

Fond of good cheer as she had always been, this cry, far more than the tears she was forcing back, revealed how much the future terrified her. She was there erect and brave in spite of everything; but what a downfall if she were no longer able to keep her room tidy, stew a piece of veal on Sundays, and gossip with the neighbours while awaiting her husband's return from work! Why, they might just as well be thrown into the gutter and carried off in the scavenger's cart.

However, Thomas intervened: "Isn't there an Asylum for the Invalids of Labour, and couldn't your husband get admitted to it?" he asked. "It seems to me that is just the place for him."

"Oh dear, no," the woman answered. "People spoke to me of that place before, and I got particulars of it. They don't take sick people there. When you call they tell you that there are hospitals for those who are ill."

With a wave of his hand Pierre confirmed her statement: it was useless to apply in that direction. He could again see himself scouring Paris, hurrying from the Lady President, Baroness Duvillard, to Fonsègue, the General Manager, and only securing a bed for Laveuve when the unhappy man was dead.

However, at that moment an infant was heard wailing, and to the amazement of both visitors Madame Toussaint entered the little closet where her son Charles had so long slept, and came out of it carrying a child, who looked scarcely twenty months old.

"Well, yes," she explained, "this is Charles's boy. He was sleeping there in his father's old bed, and now you hear him, he's woke up. . . . You see, only last Wednesday, the day before Toussaint had his stroke, I went to fetch the little one at the nurse's at St. Denis, because she had threatened to cast him adrift since Charles had got into bad habits, and no longer paid her. I said to myself at the time that work was looking up, and that my husband and I would always be able to provide for a little mouth like that. . . . But just afterwards everything collapsed! At the same time, as the child's here now I can't go and leave him in the street."

While speaking in this fashion she walked to and fro, rocking the baby in her arms. And naturally enough she reverted to Charles's folly with the girl, who had run away, leaving that infant behind her. Things might not have been so very bad if Charles had still worked as steadily as he had done before he went soldiering. In those days he had never lost an hour, and had always brought all his pay home! But he had come back from the army with much less taste for work. He argued, and had ideas of his own. He certainly hadn't yet come to bomb-throwing like that madman Salvat, but he spent half his time with Socialists and Anarchists, who put his brain in a muddle. It was a real pity to see such a strong, good-hearted young fellow turning out badly like that. But it was said in the neighbourhood that many another was inclined the same way; that the best and most intelligent of the younger men felt tired of want and unremunerative labour, and would end by

knocking everything to pieces rather than go on toiling with no certainty of food in their old age.

"Ah! yes," continued Madame Toussaint, "the sons are not like the fathers were. These fine fellows won't be as patient as my poor husband has been, letting hard work wear him away till he's become the sorry thing you see there. . . . Do you know what Charles said the other evening when he found his father on that chair, crippled like that, and unable to speak? Why, he shouted to him that he'd been a stupid jackass all his life, working himself to death for those *bourgeois*, who now wouldn't bring him so much as a glass of water. Then, as he none the less has a good heart, he began to cry his eyes out."

The baby was no longer wailing, still the good woman continued walking to and fro, rocking it in her arms and pressing it to her affectionate heart. Her son Charles could do no more for them, she said; perhaps he might be able to give them a five-franc piece now and again, but even that wasn't certain. It was of no use for her to go back to her old calling as a seamstress, she had lost all practice of it. And it would even be difficult for her to earn anything as charwoman, for she had that infant on her hands as well as her infirm husband—a big child, whom she would have to wash and feed. And so what would become of the three of them? She couldn't tell; but it made her shudder, however brave and motherly she tried to be.

For their part, Pierre and Thomas quivered with compassion, particularly when they saw big tears coursing down the cheeks of the wretched, stricken Toussaint, as he sat quite motionless in that little and still cleanly

home of toil and want. The poor man had listened to his wife, and he looked at her and at the infant now sleeping in her arms. Voiceless, unable to cry his woe aloud, he experienced the most awful anguish. What dupery his long life of labour had been! how frightfully unjust it was that all his efforts should end in such sufferings! how exasperating it was to feel himself powerless, and to see those whom he loved and who were as innocent as himself suffer and die by reason of his own suffering and death! Ah! poor old man, cripple that he was, ending like some beast of burden that has foundered by the roadside — that goal of labour! And it was all so revolting and so monstrous that he tried to put it into words, and his desperate grief ended in a frightful, raucous grunt.

“Be quiet, don’t do yourself harm!” concluded Madame Toussaint. “Things are like that, and there’s no mending them.”

Then she went to put the child to bed again, and on her return, just as Thomas and Pierre were about to speak to her of Toussaint’s employer, M. Grandier, a fresh visitor arrived. Thereupon the others decided to wait.

The new comer was Madame Chrétiennot, Toussaint’s other sister, eighteen years younger than himself. Her husband, the little clerk, had compelled her to break off almost all intercourse with her relatives, as he felt ashamed of them; nevertheless, having heard of her brother’s misfortune, she had very properly come to condole with him. She wore a gown of cheap flimsy silk, and a hat trimmed with red poppies, which she had freshened up three times already; but in spite of

this display her appearance bespoke penury, and she did her best to hide her feet on account of the shabbiness of her boots. Moreover, she was no longer the beautiful Hortense. Since a recent miscarriage, all trace of her good looks had disappeared. .

The lamentable appearance of her brother and the bareness of that home of suffering chilled her directly she crossed the threshold. And as soon as she had kissed Toussaint, and said how sorry she was to find him in such a condition, she began to lament her own fate, and recount her troubles, for fear lest she should be asked for any help.

"Ah! my dear," she said to her sister-in-law, "you are certainly much to be pitied! But if you only knew! We all have our troubles. Thus in my case, obliged as I am to dress fairly well on account of my husband's position, I have more trouble than you can imagine in making both ends meet. One can't go far on a salary of three thousand francs a year, when one has to pay seven hundred francs' rent out of it. You will perhaps say that we might lodge ourselves in a more modest way; but we can't, my dear, I must have a *salon* on account of the visits I receive. So just count! . . . Then there are my two girls. I've had to send them to school; Lucienne has begun to learn the piano and Marcelle has some taste for drawing. . . . By the way, I would have brought them with me, but I feared it would upset them too much. You will excuse me, won't you?"

Then she spoke of all the worries which she had had with her husband on account of Salvat's ignominious death. Chrétiennot, vain, quarrelsome little

fellow that he was, felt exasperated at now having a *guillotiné* in his wife's family. And he had lately begun to treat the unfortunate woman most harshly, charging her with having brought about all their troubles, and even rendering her responsible for his own mediocrity, embittered as he was more and more each day by a confined life of office work. On some evenings they had downright quarrels; she stood up for herself, and related that when she was at the confectionery shop in the Rue des Martyrs she could have married a doctor had she only chosen, for the doctor found her quite pretty enough. Now, however, she was becoming plainer and plainer, and her husband felt that he was condemned to everlasting penury; so that their life was becoming more and more dismal and quarrelsome, and as unbearable—despite the pride of being “gentleman” and “lady”—as was the destitution of the working classes.

“All the same, my dear,” at last said Madame Tous-saint, weary of her sister-in-law's endless narrative of worries, “you have had one piece of luck. You won't have the trouble of bringing up a third child, now.”

“That's true,” replied Hortense, with a sigh of relief. “How we should have managed, I don't know. . . . Still, I was very ill, and I'm far from being in good health now. The doctor says that I don't eat enough, and that I ought to have good food.”

Then she rose for the purpose of giving her brother another kiss and taking her departure; for she feared a scene on her husband's part should he happen to come home and find her absent. Once on her feet, however, she lingered there a moment longer, saying

that she also had just seen her sister, Madame Théodore, and little Céline, both of them comfortably clad and looking happy. And with a touch of jealousy she added: "Well, my husband contents himself with slaving away at his office every day. He'll never do anything to get his head cut off; and it's quite certain that nobody will think of leaving an income to Marcelle and Lucienne. . . . Well, good by, my dear, you must be brave, one must always hope that things will turn out for the best."

When she had gone off, Pierre and Thomas inquired if M. Grandidier had heard of Toussaint's misfortune and agreed to do anything for him. Madame Toussaint answered that he had so far made only a vague promise; and on learning this they resolved to speak to him as warmly as they could on behalf of the old mechanician, who had spent as many as five-and-twenty years at the works. The misfortune was that a scheme for establishing a friendly society, and even a pension fund, which had been launched before the crisis from which the works were now recovering, had collapsed through a number of obstacles and complications. Had things turned out otherwise, Thomas might have had a pittance assured him, even though he was unable to work. But under the circumstances the only hope for the poor stricken fellow lay in his employer's compassion, if not his sense of justice.

As the baby again began to cry, Madame Toussaint went to fetch it, and she was once more carrying it to and fro, when Thomas pressed her husband's sound hand between both his own. "We will come back," said the young man; "we won't forsake you, Tous-

saint. You know very well that people like you, for you've always been a good and steady workman. So rely on us, we will do all we can."

Then they left him tearful and overpowered, in that dismal room, while, up and down beside him, his wife rocked the squealing infant—that other luckless creature, who was now so heavy on the old folks' hands, and like them was fated to die of want and unjust toil.

Toil, manual toil, panting at every effort, this was what Pierre and Thomas once more found at the works. From the slender pipes above the roofs spurted rhythmical puffs of steam, which seemed like the very breath of all that labour. And in the work-shops one found a continuous rumbling, a whole army of men in motion, forging, filing, and piercing, amidst the spinning of leather gearing and the trembling of machinery. The day was ending with a final feverish effort to complete some task or other before the bell should ring for departure.

On inquiring for the master Thomas learnt that he had not been seen since *déjeuner*, which was such an unusual occurrence that the young man at once feared some terrible scene in the silent pavilion, whose shutters were ever closed upon Grandidier's unhappy wife—that mad but beautiful creature, whom he loved so passionately that he had never been willing to part from her. The pavilion could be seen from the little glazed work-shop which Thomas usually occupied, and as he and Pierre stood waiting there, it looked very peaceful and pleasant amidst the big lilac-bushes planted round about it. Surely, they thought, it

ought to have been brightened by the gay gown of a young woman and the laughter of playful children. But all at once a loud, piercing shriek reached their ears, followed by howls and moans, like those of an animal that is being beaten or possibly slaughtered. Ah! those howls ringing out amidst all the stir of the toiling works, punctuated it seemed by the rhythmical puffing of the steam, accompanied too by the dull rumbling of the machinery! The receipts of the business had been doubling and doubling since the last stock-taking; there was increase of prosperity every month, the bad times were over, far behind. Grandier was realising a large fortune with his famous bicycle for the million, the "Lisette"; and the approaching vogue of motor-cars also promised huge gains, should he again start making little motor-engines, as he meant to do, as soon as Thomas's long-projected motor should be perfected. But what was wealth when in that dismal pavilion, whose shutters were ever closed, those frightful shrieks continued, proclaiming some terrible drama, which all the stir and bustle of the prosperous works were unable to stifle?

Pierre and Thomas looked at one another, pale and quivering. And all at once, as the cries ceased and the pavilion sank into death-like silence once more, the latter said in an undertone: "She is usually very gentle, she will sometimes spend whole days sitting on a carpet like a little child. He is fond of her when she is like that; he lays her down and picks her up, caresses her and makes her laugh as if she were a baby. Ah! how dreadfully sad it is! When

an attack comes upon her she gets frantic, tries to bite herself, and kill herself by throwing herself against the walls. And then he has to struggle with her, for no one else is allowed to touch her. He tries to restrain her, and holds her in his arms to calm her. . . . But how terrible it was just now! Did you hear? I do not think she has ever had such a frightful attack before."

For a quarter of an hour longer profound silence prevailed. Then Grandidier came out of the pavilion, bareheaded and still ghastly pale. Passing the little glazed work-shop on his way, he perceived Thomas and Pierre there, and at once came in. But he was obliged to lean against a bench like a man who is dazed, haunted by a nightmare. His good-natured, energetic face retained an expression of acute anguish; and his left ear was scratched and bleeding. However, he at once wished to talk, overcome his feelings, and return to his life of activity. "I am very pleased to see you, my dear Thomas," said he, "I have been thinking over what you told me about our little motor. We must go into the matter again."

Seeing how distracted he was, it occurred to the young man that some sudden diversion, such as the story of another's misfortunes, might perhaps draw him from his haunting thoughts. "Of course I am at your disposal," he replied; "but before talking of that matter I should like to tell you that we have just seen Toussaint, that poor old fellow who has been stricken with paralysis. His awful fate has quite distressed us. He is in the greatest destitution, for-

saken as it were by the roadside, after all his years of labour."

Thomas dwelt upon the quarter of a century which the old workman had spent at the factory, and suggested that it would be only just to take some account of his long efforts, the years of his life which he had devoted to the establishment. And he asked that he might be assisted in the name both of equity and compassion.

"Ah! monsieur," Pierre in his turn ventured to say. "I should like to take you for an instant into that bare room, and show you that poor, aged, worn-out, stricken man, who no longer has even the power of speech left him to tell people his sufferings. There can be no greater wretchedness than to die in this fashion, despairing of all kindness and justice."

Grandidier had listened to them in silence. But big tears had irresistibly filled his eyes, and when he spoke it was in a very low and tremulous voice: "The greatest wretchedness, who can tell what it is? Who can speak of it if he has not known the wretchedness of others? Yes, yes, it's sad undoubtedly that poor Toussaint should be reduced to that state at his age, not knowing even if he will have food to eat on the morrow. But I know sorrows that are just as crushing, abominations which poison one's life in a still greater degree. . . . Ah! yes, food indeed! To think that happiness will reign in the world when everybody has food to eat! What an idiotic hope!"

The whole grievous tragedy of his life was in the shudder which had come over him. To be the employer, the master, the man who is making money,

who disposes of capital and is envied by his workmen, to own an establishment to which prosperity has returned, whose machinery coins gold, apparently leaving one no other trouble than that of pocketing one's profits; and yet at the same time to be the most wretched of men, to know no day exempt from anguish, to find each evening at one's hearth no other reward or prop than the most atrocious torture of the heart! Everything, even success, has to be paid for. And thus that triumpher, that money-maker, whose pile was growing larger at each successive inventory, was sobbing with bitter grief.

However, he showed himself kindly disposed towards Toussaint, and promised to assist him. As for a pension that was an idea which he could not entertain, as it was the negation of the wage-system such as it existed. He energetically defended his rights as an employer, repeating that the strain of competition would compel him to avail himself of them so long as the present system should endure. His part in it was to do good business in an honest way. However, he regretted that his men had never carried out the scheme of establishing a relief fund, and he said that he would do his best to induce them to take it in hand again.

Some colour had now come back to his cheeks; for on returning to the interests of his life of battle he felt his energy restored. He again reverted to the question of the little motor, and spoke of it for some time with Thomas, while Pierre waited, feeling quite upset. Ah! he thought, how universal was the thirst for happiness! Then, in spite of the many technical terms that were used he caught a little of what the

others were saying. Small steam motors had been made at the works in former times; but they had not proved successes. In point of fact a new propelling force was needed. Electricity, though everyone foresaw its future triumph, was so far out of the question on account of the weight of the apparatus which its employment necessitated. So only petroleum remained, and the inconvenience attaching to its use was so great that victory and fortune would certainly rest with the manufacturer who should be able to replace it by some other hitherto unknown agent. In the discovery and adaptation of the latter lay the whole problem.

"Yes, I am eager about it now," at last exclaimed Grandidier in an animated way. "I allowed you to prosecute your experiments without troubling you with any inquisitive questions. But a solution is becoming imperative."

Thomas smiled: "Well, you must remain patient just a little longer," said he; "I believe that I am on the right road."

Then Grandidier shook hands with him and Pierre, and went off to make his usual round through his busy, bustling works, whilst near at hand, awaiting his return, stood the closed pavilion, where every evening he was fated to relapse into endless, incurable anguish.

The daylight was already waning when Pierre and Thomas, after re-ascending the height of Montmartre, walked towards the large work-shop which Jahan, the sculptor, had set up among the many sheds whose erection had been necessitated by the building of the Sacred Heart. There was here a stretch of ground

littered with materials, an extraordinary chaos of building stone, beams and machinery; and pending the time when an army of navvies would come to set the whole place in order, one could see gaping trenches, rough flights of descending steps and fences, imperfectly closing doorways which conducted to the substructures of the basilica.

Halting in front of Jahan's work-shop, Thomas pointed to one of these doorways by which one could reach the foundation works. "Have you never had an idea of visiting the foundations?" he inquired of Pierre. "There's quite a city down there on which millions of money have been spent. They could only find firm soil at the very base of the height, and they had to excavate more than eighty shafts, fill them with concrete, and then rear their church on all those subterranean columns. . . . Yes, that is so. Of course the columns cannot be seen, but it is they who hold that insulting edifice aloft, right over Paris!"

Having drawn near to the fence, Pierre was looking at an open doorway beyond it, a sort of dark landing whence steps descended as if into the bowels of the earth. And he thought of those invisible columns of concrete, and of all the stubborn energy and desire for domination which had set and kept the edifice erect.

Thomas was at last obliged to call him. "Let us make haste," said he, "the twilight will soon be here. We shan't be able to see much."

They had arranged to meet Antoine at Jahan's, as the sculptor wished to show them a new model he had prepared. When they entered the work-shop they

found the two assistants still working at the colossal angel which had been ordered for the basilica. Standing on a scaffolding they were rough-hewing its symmetrical wings, whilst Jahan, seated on a low chair, with his sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and his hands soiled with clay, was contemplating a figure some three feet high on which he had just been working.

"Ah! it's you," he exclaimed. "Antoine has been waiting more than half an hour for you. He's gone outside with Lise to see the sun set over Paris, I think. But they will soon be back."

Then he relapsed into silence, with his eyes fixed on his work.

This was a bare, erect, lofty female figure, of such august majesty, so simple were its lines, that it suggested something gigantic. The figure's abundant, outspread hair suggested rays around its face, which beamed with sovereign beauty like the sun. And its only gesture was one of offer and of greeting; its arms were thrown slightly forward, and its hands were open for the grasp of all mankind.

Still lingering in his dream Jahan began to speak slowly: "You remember that I wanted a pendant for my figure of Fecundity. I had modelled a Charity, but it pleased me so little and seemed so commonplace that I let the clay dry and spoil. . . . And then the idea of a figure of Justice came to me. But not a gowned figure with the sword and the scales! That wasn't the Justice that inspired me. What haunted my mind was the other Justice, the one that the lowly and the sufferers await, the one who alone can some day set a little order and happiness among us. And I

pictured her like that, quite bare, quite simple, and very lofty. She is the sun as it were, a sun all beauty, harmony and strength; for justice is only to be found in the sun which shines in the heavens for one and all, and bestows on poor and rich alike its magnificence and light and warmth, which are the source of all life. And so my figure, you see, has her hands outstretched as if she were offering herself to all mankind, greeting it and granting it the gift of eternal life in eternal beauty. Ah! to be beautiful and strong and just, one's whole dream lies in that."

Jahan relighted his pipe and burst into a merry laugh. "Well, I think the good woman carries herself upright. . . . What do you fellows say?"

His visitors highly praised his work. Pierre for his part was much affected at finding in this artistic conception the very idea that he had so long been revolving in his mind—the idea of an era of Justice rising from the ruins of the world, which Charity after centuries of trial had failed to save.

Then the sculptor gaily explained that he had prepared his model there instead of at home, in order to console himself a little for his big dummy of an angel, the prescribed triteness of which disgusted him. Some fresh objections had been raised with respect to the folds of the robe, which gave some prominence to the thighs, and in the end he had been compelled to modify all of the drapery.

"Oh! it's just as they like!" he cried; "it's no work of mine, you know; it's simply an order which I'm executing just as a mason builds a wall. There's no religious art left, it has been killed by stupidity

and disbelief. Ah! if social or human art could only revive, how glorious to be one of the first to bear the tidings!"

Then he paused. Where could the youngsters, Antoine and Lise, have got to, he wondered. He threw the door wide open, and, a little distance away, among the materials littering the waste ground, one could see Antoine's tall figure and Lise's short slender form standing out against the immensity of Paris, which was all golden amidst the sun's farewell. The young man's strong arm supported Lise, who with this help walked beside him without feeling any fatigue. Slender and graceful, like a girl blossoming into womanhood, she raised her eyes to his with a smile of infinite gratitude, which proclaimed that she belonged to him for evermore.

"Ah! they are coming back," said Jahan. "The miracle is now complete, you know. I'm delighted at it. I did not know what to do with her; I had even renounced all attempts to teach her to read; I left her for days together in a corner, infirm and tongue-tied like a lack-wit. . . . But your brother came and took her in hand somehow or other. She listened to him and understood him, and began to read and write with him, and grow intelligent and gay. Then, as her limbs still gained no suppleness, and she remained infirm, ailing and puny, he began by carrying her here, and then helped her to walk in such wise that she can now do so by herself. In a few weeks' time she has positively grown and become quite charming. Yes, I assure you, it is second birth, real creation. Just look at them!"

Antoine and Lise were still slowly approaching. The evening breeze which rose from the great city, where all was yet heat and sunshine, brought them a bath of life. If the young man had chosen that spot, with its splendid horizon, open to the full air which wafted all the germs of life, it was doubtless because he felt that nowhere else could he instil more vitality, more soul, more strength into her. And love had been created by love. He had found her asleep, benumbed, without power of motion or intellect, and he had awakened her, kindled life in her, loved her, that he might be loved by her in return. She was his work, she was part of himself.

"So you no longer feel tired, little one?" said Jahan.

She smiled divinely. "Oh! no, it's so pleasant, so beautiful, to walk straight on like this. . . . All I desire is to go on for ever and ever with Antoine."

The others laughed, and Jahan exclaimed in his good-natured way: "Let us hope that he won't take you so far. You've reached your destination now, and I shan't be the one to prevent you from being happy."

Antoine was already standing before the figure of Justice, to which the falling twilight seemed to impart a quiver of life. "Oh! how divinely simple, how divinely beautiful!" said he.

For his own part he had lately finished a new wood engraving, which depicted Lise holding a book in her hand, an engraving instinct with truth and emotion, showing her awakened to intelligence and love. And this time he had achieved his desire, making no pre-

liminary drawing, but tackling the block with his graver, straight away, in presence of his model. And infinite hopefulness had come upon him, he was dreaming of great original works in which the whole period that he belonged to would live anew and for ever.

Thomas now wished to return home. So they shook hands with Jahan, who, as his day's work was over, put on his coat to take his sister back to the Rue du Calvaire.

"Till to-morrow, Lise," said Antoine, inclining his head to kiss her.

She raised herself on tip-toes, and offered him her eyes, which he had opened to life. "Till to-morrow, Antoine," said she.

Outside, the twilight was falling. Pierre was the first to cross the threshold, and as he did so, he saw so extraordinary a sight that for an instant he felt stupefied. But it was certain enough: he could plainly distinguish his brother Guillaume emerging from the gaping doorway which conducted to the foundations of the basilica. And he saw him hastily climb over the palings, and then pretend to be there by pure chance, as though he had come up from the Rue Lamarek. When he accosted his two sons, as if he were delighted to meet them, and began to say that he had just come from Paris, Pierre asked himself if he had been dreaming. However, an anxious glance which his brother cast at him convinced him that he had been right. And then he not only felt ill at ease in presence of that man whom he had never previously known to lie, but it seemed to him that he was at last on the track of all he had feared, the

formidable mystery that he had for some time past felt brewing around him in the little peaceful house.

When Guillaume, his sons and his brother reached home and entered the large workroom overlooking Paris, it was so dark that they fancied nobody was there.

"What! nobody in?" said Guillaume.

But in a somewhat low, quiet voice François answered out of the gloom: "Why, yes, I'm here."

He had remained at his table, where he had worked the whole afternoon, and as he could no longer read, he now sat in a dreamy mood with his head resting on his hands, his eyes wandering over Paris, where night was gradually falling. As his examination was now near at hand, he was living in a state of severe mental strain.

"What, you are still working there!" said his father. "Why didn't you ask for a lamp?"

"No, I wasn't working, I was looking at Paris," François slowly answered. "It's singular how the night falls over it by degrees. The last district that remained visible was the Montague Ste. Geneviève, the plateau of the Pantheon, where all our knowledge and science have grown up. A sun-ray still gilds the schools and libraries and laboratories, when the low-lying districts of trade are already steeped in darkness. I won't say that the planet has a particular partiality for us at the École Normale, but it's certain that its beams still linger on our roofs, when they are to be seen nowhere else."

He began to laugh at his jest. Still one could see how ardent was his faith in mental effort, how entirely he gave himself to mental labour, which, in his opinion,

could alone bring truth, establish justice and create happiness.

Then came a short spell of silence. Paris sank more and more deeply into the night, growing black and mysterious, till all at once sparks of light began to appear.

"The lamps are being lighted," resumed François; "work is being resumed on all sides."

Then Guillaume, who likewise had been dreaming, immersed in his fixed idea, exclaimed: "Work, yes, no doubt! But for work to give a full harvest it must be fertilised by will. There is something which is superior to work."

Thomas and Antoine had drawn near. And François, as much for them as for himself, inquired: "What is that, father?"

"Action."

For a moment the three young men remained silent, impressed by the solemnity of the hour, quivering too beneath the great waves of darkness which rose from the vague ocean of the city. Then a young voice remarked, though whose it was one could not tell: "Action is but work."

And Pierre, who lacked the respectful quietude, the silent faith, of his nephews, now felt his nervousness increasing. That huge and terrifying mystery of which he was dimly conscious rose before him, while a great quiver sped by in the darkness, over that black city where the lamps were now being lighted for a whole passionate night of work.

IV

THE CRISIS

A GREAT ceremony was to take place that day at the basilica of the Sacred Heart. Ten thousand pilgrims were to be present there, at a solemn consecration of the Holy Sacrament; and pending the arrival of four o'clock, the hour fixed for the service, Montmartre would be invaded by people. Its slopes would be black with swarming devotees, the shops where religious emblems and pictures were sold would be besieged, the cafés and taverns would be crowded to overflowing. It would all be like some huge fair, and meantime the big bell of the basilica, "La Savoyarde," would be ringing peal on peal over the holiday-making multitude.

When Pierre entered the workroom in the morning he perceived Guillaume and Mère-Grand alone there; and a remark which he heard the former make caused him to stop short and listen from behind a tall-revolving bookstand. Mère-Grand sat sewing in her usual place near the big window, while Guillaume stood before her, speaking in a low voice.

"Mother," said he, "everything is ready, it is for to-day."

She let her work fall, and raised her eyes, looking very pale. "Ah!" she said, "so you have made up your mind."

"Yes, irrevocably. At four o'clock I shall be yonder, and it will all be over."

"'Tis well — you are the master."

Silence fell, terrible silence. Guillaume's voice seemed to come from far away, from somewhere beyond the world. It was evident that his resolution was unshakable, that his tragic dream, his fixed idea of martyrdom, wholly absorbed him. Mère-Grand looked at him with her pale eyes, like an heroic woman who had grown old in relieving the sufferings of others, and had ever shown all the abnegation and devotion of an intrepid heart, which nothing but the idea of duty could influence. She knew Guillaume's terrible scheme, and had helped him to regulate the pettiest details of it ; but if on the one hand, after all the iniquity she had seen and endured, she admitted that fierce and exemplary punishment might seem necessary, and that even the idea of purifying the world by the fire of a volcano might be entertained, on the other hand, she believed too strongly in the necessity of living one's life bravely to the very end, to be able, under any circumstances, to regard death as either good or profitable.

"My son," she gently resumed, "I witnessed the growth of your scheme, and it neither surprised nor angered me. I accepted it as one accepts lightning, the very fire of the skies, something of sovereign purity and power. And I have helped you through it all, and have taken upon myself to act as the mouthpiece of your conscience. . . . But let me tell you once more, one ought never to desert the cause of life."

"It is useless to speak, mother," Guillaume replied ;

"I have resolved to give my life and cannot take it back. . . . Are you now unwilling to carry out my desires, remain here, and act as we have decided, when all is over?"

She did not answer this inquiry, but in her turn, speaking slowly and gravely, put a question to him: "So it is useless for me to speak to you of the children, myself and the house?" said she. "You have thought it all over, you are quite determined?" And as he simply answered "Yes," she added: "'Tis well, you are the master. . . . I will be the one who is to remain behind and act. And you may be without fear, your bequest is in good hands. All that we have decided together shall be done."

Once more they became silent. Then she again inquired: "At four o'clock, you say, at the moment of that consecration?"

"Yes, at four o'clock."

She was still looking at him with her pale eyes, and there seemed to be something superhuman in her simplicity and grandeur as she sat there in her thin black gown. Her glance, in which the greatest bravery and the deepest sadness mingled, filled Guillaume with acute emotion. His hands began to tremble, and he asked: "Will you let me kiss you, mother?"

"Oh! right willingly, my son," she responded. "Your path of duty may not be mine, but you see I respect your views and love you."

They kissed one another, and when Pierre, whom the scene had chilled to his heart, presented himself as if he were just arriving, Mère-Grand had quietly taken up her needlework once more, while Guillaume

was going to and fro, setting one of his laboratory shelves in order with all his wonted activity.

At noon when lunch was ready, they found it necessary to wait for Thomas, who had not yet come home. His brothers François and Antoine complained in a jesting way, saying that they were dying of hunger, while for her part Marie, who had made a *crème*, and was very proud of it, declared that they would eat it all, and that those who came late would have to go without tasting it. When Thomas eventually put in an appearance he was greeted with jeers.

“But it wasn’t my fault,” said he; “I stupidly came up the hill by way of the Rue de la Barre, and you can have no notion what a crowd I fell upon. Quite ten thousand pilgrims must have camped there last night. I am told that as many as possible were huddled together in the St. Joseph Refuge. The others no doubt had to sleep in the open air. And now they are busy eating, here, there and everywhere, all over the patches of waste ground and even on the pavements. One can scarcely set one foot before the other without risk of treading on somebody.”

The meal proved a very gay one, though Pierre found the gaiety forced and excessive. Yet the young people could surely know nothing of the frightful, invisible thing which to Pierre ever seemed to be hovering around in the bright sunlight of that splendid June day. Was it that the dim presentiment which comes to loving hearts when mourning threatens them, swept by during the short intervals of silence that followed the joyous outbursts? Although Guillaume looked somewhat pale, and spoke with unusual caress-

ing softness, he retained his customary bright smile. But, on the other hand, never had Mère-Grand been more silent or more grave.

Marie's *crème* proved a great success, and the others congratulated her on it so fulsomely that they made her blush. Then, all at once, heavy silence fell once more, a deathly chill seemed to sweep by, making every face turn pale—even while they were still cleaning their plates with their little spoons.

"Ah! that bell," exclaimed François; "it is really intolerable. I can feel my head splitting."

He referred to "La Savoyarde," the big bell of the basilica, which had now begun to toll, sending forth deep sonorous volumes of sound, which ever and ever winged their flight over the immensity of Paris. In the workroom they were all listening to the clang.

"Will it keep on like that till four o'clock?" asked Marie.

"Oh! at four o'clock," replied Thomas, "at the moment of the consecration you will hear something much louder than that. The great peals of joy, the song of triumph will then ring out."

Guillaume was still smiling. "Yes, yes," said he, "those who don't want to be deafened for life had better keep their windows closed. The worst is, that Paris has to hear it whether it will or no, and even as far away as the Pantheon, so I'm told."

Meantime Mère-Grand remained silent and impassive. Antoine for his part expressed his disgust with the horrible religious pictures for which the pilgrims fought—pictures which in some respects suggested those on the lids of sweetmeat boxes, although they

depicted the Christ with His breast ripped open and displaying His bleeding heart. There could be no more repulsive materialism, no grosser or baser art, said Antoine. Then they rose from table, talking at the top of their voices so as to make themselves heard above the incessant din which came from the big bell.

Immediately afterwards they all set to work again. Mère-Grand took her everlasting needlework in hand once more, while Marie, sitting near her, continued some embroidery. The young men also attended to their respective tasks, and now and again raised their heads and exchanged a few words. Guillaume, for his part, likewise seemed very busy; Pierre alone coming and going in a state of anguish, beholding them all as in a nightmare, and attributing some terrible meaning to the most innocent remarks. During *déjeuner*, in order to explain the frightful discomfort into which he was thrown by the gaiety of the meal, he had been obliged to say that he felt poorly. And now he was looking and listening and waiting with ever-growing anxiety.

Shortly before three o'clock, Guillaume glanced at his watch and then quietly took up his hat. "Well," said he, "I'm going out."

His sons, Mère-Grand and Marie raised their heads.

"I'm going out," he repeated, "*au revoir*."

Still he did not go off. Pierre could divine that he was struggling, stiffening himself against the frightful tempest which was raging within him, striving to prevent either shudder or pallor from betraying his awful secret. Ah! he must have suffered keenly; he

dared not give his sons a last kiss, for fear lest he might rouse some suspicion in their minds, which would impel them to oppose him and prevent his death! At last with supreme heroism he managed to overcome himself.

"*Au revoir*, boys."

"*Au revoir*, father. Will you be home early?"

"Yes, yes. . . . Don't worry about me, do plenty of work."

Mère-Grand, still majestically silent, kept her eyes fixed upon him. Her he had ventured to kiss, and their glances met and mingled, instinct with all that he had decided and that she had promised: their common dream of truth and justice.

"I say, Guillaume," exclaimed Marie gaily, "will you undertake a commission for me if you are going down by way of the Rue des Martyrs?"

"Why, certainly," he replied.

"Well, then, please look in at my dressmaker's, and tell her that I shan't go to try my gown on till to-morrow morning."

It was a question of her wedding dress, a gown of light grey silk, the stylishness of which she considered very amusing. Whenever she spoke of it, both she and the others began to laugh.

"It's understood, my dear," said Guillaume, likewise making merry over it. "We know it's Cinderella's court robe, eh? The fairy brocade and lace that are to make you very beautiful and for ever happy."

However, the laughter ceased, and in the sudden silence which fell, it again seemed as if death were

passing by with a great flapping of wings and an icy gust which chilled the hearts of everyone remaining there.

"It's understood; so now I'm really off," resumed Guillaume. "*Au revoir*, children."

Then he sallied forth, without even turning round, and for a moment they could hear the firm tread of his feet over the garden gravel.

Pierre having invented a pretext was able to follow him a couple of minutes afterwards. As a matter of fact there was no need for him to dog Guillaume's heels, for he knew where his brother was going. He was thoroughly convinced that he would find him at that doorway, conducting to the foundations of the basilica, whence he had seen him emerge two days before. And so he wasted no time in looking for him among the crowd of pilgrims going to the church. His only thought was to hurry on and reach Jahan's workshop. And in accordance with his expectation, just as he arrived there, he perceived Guillaume slipping between the broken palings. The crush and the confusion prevailing among the 'concourse of believers favored Pierre as it had his brother, in such wise that he was able to follow the latter and enter the doorway without being noticed. Once there he had to pause and draw breath for a moment, so greatly did the beating of his heart oppress him.

A precipitous flight of steps, where all was steeped in darkness, descended from the narrow entry. It was with infinite precaution that Pierre ventured into the gloom, which ever grew denser and denser. He lowered his feet gently so as to make no noise, and feeling

the walls with his hands, turned round and round as he went lower and lower into a kind of well. However, the descent was not a very long one. As soon as he found beaten ground beneath his feet he paused, no longer daring to stir for fear of betraying his presence. The darkness was like ink, and there was not a sound, a breath; the silence was complete.

How should he find his way? he wondered. Which direction ought he to take? He was still hesitating when some twenty paces away he suddenly saw a bright spark, the gleam of a lucifer. Guillaume was lighting a candle. Pierre recognised his broad shoulders, and from that moment he simply had to follow the flickering light along a walled and vaulted subterranean gallery. It seemed to be interminable and to run in a northerly direction, towards the nave of the basilica.

All at once the little light at last stopped, while Pierre, anxious to see what would happen, continued to advance, treading as softly as he could and remaining in the gloom. He found that Guillaume had stood his candle upon the ground in the middle of a kind of low rotunda under the crypt, and that he had knelt down and moved aside a long flagstone which seemed to cover a cavity. They were here among the foundations of the basilica; and one of the columns or piles of concrete poured into shafts in order to support the building could be seen. The gap, which the stone slab removed by Guillaume had covered, was by the very side of the pillar; it was either some natural surface flaw, or a deep fissure caused by some subsidence or settling of the soil. The heads of other

pillars could be descried around, and these the cleft seemed to be reaching, for little slits branched out in all directions. Then, on seeing his brother leaning forward, like one who is for the last time examining a mine he has laid before applying a match to the fuse, Pierre suddenly understood the whole terrifying business. Considerable quantities of the new explosive had been brought to that spot. Guillaume had made the journey a score of times at carefully selected hours, and all his powder had been poured into the gap beside the pillar, spreading to the slightest rifts below, saturating the soil at a great depth, and in this wise forming a natural mine of incalculable force. And now the powder was flush with the flagstone which Guillaume has just moved aside. It was only necessary to throw a match there, and everything would be blown into the air!

For a moment an acute chill of horror rooted Pierre to the spot. He could neither have taken a step nor raised a cry. He pictured the swarming throng above him, the ten thousand pilgrims crowding the lofty naves of the basilica to witness the solemn consecration of the Host. Peal upon peal flew from "La Savoyarde," incense smoked, and ten thousand voices raised a hymn of magnificence and praise. And all at once came thunder and earthquake, and a volcano opening and belching forth fire and smoke, and swallowing up the whole church and its multitude of worshippers. Breaking the concrete piles and rending the unsound soil, the explosion, which was certain to be one of extraordinary violence, would doubtless split the edifice atwain, and hurl one-half down the slopes

descending towards Paris, whilst the other on the side of the apse would crumble and collapse upon the spot where it stood. And how fearful would be the avalanche; a broken forest of scaffoldings, a hail of stonework, rushing and bounding through the dust and smoke on to the roofs below; whilst the violence of the shock would threaten the whole of Montmartre, which, it seemed likely, must stagger and sink in one huge mass of ruins!

However, Guillaume had again risen. The candle standing on the ground, its flame shooting up, erect and slender, threw his huge shadow all over the subterranean vault. Amidst the *dénse* blackness the light looked like some dismal stationary star. Guillaume drew near to it in order to see what time it was by his watch. It proved to be five minutes past three. So he had nearly another hour to wait. He was in no hurry, he wished to carry out his design punctually, at the precise moment he had selected; and he therefore sat down on a block of stone, and remained there without moving, quiet and patient. The candle now cast its light upon his pale face, upon his towering brow crowned with white hair, upon the whole of his energetic countenance, which still looked handsome and young, thanks to his bright eyes and dark moustaches. And not a muscle of his face stirred; he simply gazed into the void. What thoughts could be passing through his mind at that supreme moment? Who could tell? There was not a quiver; heavy night, the deep eternal silence of the earth reigned all around.

Then Pierre, having quieted his palpitating heart,

drew near. At the sound of his footsteps Guillaume rose menacingly, but he immediately recognised his brother, and did not seem astonished to see him.

"Ah! it's you," he said, "you followed me. . . . I felt that you possessed my secret. And it grieves me that you should have abused your knowledge to join me here. You might have spared me this last sorrow."

Pierre clasped his trembling hands, and at once tried to entreat him. "Brother, brother," he began.

"No, don't speak yet," said Guillaume, "if you absolutely wish it I will listen to you by-and-by. We have nearly an hour before us, so we can chat. But I want you to understand the futility of all you may think needful to tell me. My resolution is unshakable; I was a long time coming to it, and in carrying it out I shall simply be acting in accordance with my reason and my conscience."

Then he quietly related that having decided upon a great deed he had long hesitated as to which edifice he should destroy. The opera-house had momentarily tempted him, but he had reflected that there would be no great significance in the whirlwind of anger and justice destroying a little set of enjoyers. In fact, such a deed might savour of jealousy and covetousness. Next he had thought of the Bourse, where he might strike a blow at money, the great agent of corruption, and the capitalist society in whose clutches the wage-earners groaned. Only, here again the blow would fall upon a restricted circle. Then an idea of destroying the Palace of Justice, particularly the assize court, had occurred to him. It was a very tempting thought — to wreak justice upon human justice,

to sweep away the witnesses, the culprit, the public prosecutor who charges the latter, the counsel who defends him, the judges who sentence him, and the lounging public which comes to the spot as to the unfolding of some sensational serial. And then too what fierce irony there would be in the summary superior justice of the volcano swallowing up everything indiscriminately without pausing to enter into details. However, the plan over which he had most lingered was that of blowing up the Arc de Triomphe. This he regarded as an odious monument which perpetuated warfare, hatred among nations, and the false, dearly purchased, sanguineous glory of conquerors. That colossus raised to the memory of so much frightful slaughter which had uselessly put an end to so many human lives, ought, he considered, to be slaughtered in its turn. Could he so have arranged things that the earth should swallow it up, he might have achieved the glory of causing no other death than his own, of dying alone, struck down, crushed to pieces beneath that giant of stone. What a tomb, and what a memory might he thus have left to the world!

"But there was no means of approaching it," he continued, "no basement, no cellar, so I had to give up the idea. . . . And then, although I'm perfectly willing to die alone, I thought what a loftier and more terrible lesson there would be in the unjust death of an innocent multitude, of thousands of unknown people, of all those that might happen to be passing. In the same way as human society by dint of injustice, want and harsh regulations causes so many innocent victims, so must punishment fall as the lightning falls,

indiscriminately killing and destroying whatever it may encounter in its course. When a man sets his foot on an ant-hill, he gives no heed to all the lives which he stamps out."

Pierre, whom this theory rendered quite indignant, raised a cry of protest: "Oh! brother, brother, is it you who are saying such things?"

Yet, Guillaume did not pause: "If I have ended by choosing this basilica of the Sacred Heart," he continued, "it is because I found it near at hand and easy to destroy. But it is also because it haunts and exasperates me, because I have long since condemned it. . . . As I have often said to you, one cannot imagine anything more preposterous than Paris, our great Paris, crowned and dominated by this temple raised to the glorification of the absurd. Is it not outrageous that common sense should receive such a smack after so many centuries of science, that Rome should claim the right of triumphing in this insolent fashion, on our loftiest height in the full sunlight? The priests want Paris to repent and do penitence for its liberative work of truth and justice. But its only right course is to sweep away all that hampers and insults it in its march towards deliverance. And so may the temple fall with its deity of falsehood and servitude! And may its ruins crush its worshippers, so that like one of the old geological revolutions of the world, the catastrophe may resound through the very entrails of mankind, and renew and change it!"

"Brother, brother!" again cried Pierre, quite beside himself, "is it you who are talking? What! you, a great scientist, a man of great heart, you have come

to this! What madness is stirring you that you should think and say such abominable things? On the evening when we confessed our secrets one to the other, you told me of your proud and lofty dream of ideal Anarchy. There would be free harmony in life, which left to its natural forces would of itself create happiness. But you still rebelled against the idea of theft and murder. You would not accept them as right or necessary; you merely explained and excused them. What has happened then that you, all brain and thought, should now have become the hateful hand that acts?"

"Salvat has been guillotined," said Guillaume simply, "and I read his will and testament in his last glance. I am merely an executor. . . . And what has happened, you ask? Why, all that has made me suffer for four months past, the whole social evil which surrounds us, and which must be brought to an end."

Silence fell. The brothers looked at one another in the darkness. And Pierre now understood things. He saw that Guillaume was changed, that the terrible gust of revolutionary contagion sweeping over Paris had transformed him. It had all come from the duality of his nature, the presence of contradictory elements within him. On one side one found a scientist whose whole creed lay in observation and experiment, who, in dealing with nature, evinced the most cautious logic; while on the other side was a social dreamer, haunted by ideas of fraternity, equality and justice, and eager for universal happiness. Thence had first come the theoretical anarchist that

he had been, one in whom science and chimeras were mingled, who dreamt of human society returning to the harmonious law of the spheres, each man free, in a free association, regulated by love alone. Neither Théophile Morin with the doctrines of Proudhon and Comte, nor Bache with those of St. Simon and Fourier, had been able to satisfy his desire for the absolute. All those systems had seemed to him imperfect and chaotic, destructive of one another, and tending to the same wretchedness of life. Janzen alone had occasionally satisfied him with some of his curt phrases which shot over the horizon, like arrows conquering the whole earth for the human family. And then in Guillaume's big heart, which the idea of want, the unjust sufferings of the lowly and the poor exasperated, Salvat's tragic adventure had suddenly found place, fomenting supreme rebellion. For long weeks he had lived on with trembling hands, with growing anguish clutching at his throat. First had come that bomb and the explosion which still made him quiver, then the vile cupidity of the newspapers howling for the poor wretch's head, then the search for him and the hunt through the Bois de Boulogne, till he fell into the hands of the police, covered with mud and dying of starvation. And afterwards there had been the assize court, the judges, the gendarmes, the witnesses, the whole of France arrayed against one man, and bent on making him pay for the universal crime. And finally, there had come the guillotine, the monstrous, the filthy beast consummating irreparable injustice in human justice's name. One sole idea now remained to Guillaume, that idea of justice which

maddened him, leaving naught in his mind save the thought of the just, avenging flare by which he would repair the evil and ensure that which was right for all time forward. Salvat had looked at him, and contagion had done its work; he glowed with a desire for death, a desire to give his own blood and set the blood of others flowing, in order that mankind, amidst its fright and horror, should decree the return of the golden age.

Pierre understood the stubborn blindness of such insanity; and he felt utterly upset by the fear that he should be unable to overcome it. "You are mad, brother!" he exclaimed, "they have driven you mad! It is a gust of violence passing; they were treated in a wrong way and too relentlessly at the outset, and now that they are avenging one another, it may be that blood will never cease to flow. . . . But, listen, brother, throw off that nightmare. You can't be a Salvat who murders or a Bergaz who steals! Remember the pillage of the Princess's house and remember the fair-haired, pretty child whom we saw lying yonder, ripped open. . . . You do not, you cannot belong to that set, brother —"

With a wave of his hand, Guillaume brushed these vain reasons aside. Of what consequence were a few lives, his own included? No change had ever taken place in the world without millions and millions of existences being stamped out.

"But you had a great scheme in hand," cried Pierre, hoping to save him by reviving his sense of duty. "It isn't allowable for you to go off like this."

Then he fervently strove to awaken his brother's

scientific pride. He spoke to him of his secret, of that great engine of warfare, which could destroy armies and reduce cities to dust, and which he had intended to offer to France, so that on emerging victorious from the approaching war, she might afterwards become the deliverer of the world. And it was this grand scheme that he had abandoned, preferring to employ his explosive in killing innocent people and overthrowing a church, which would be built afresh, whatever the cost, and become a sanctuary of martyrs!

Guillaume smiled. "I have not relinquished my scheme," said he, "I have simply modified it. Did I not tell you of my doubts, my anxious perplexity? Ah! to believe that one holds the destiny of the world in one's grasp, and to tremble and hesitate and wonder if the intelligence and wisdom, that are needful for things to take the one wise course, will be forthcoming! At sight of all the stains upon our great Paris, all the errors and transgressions which we lately witnessed, I shuddered. I asked myself if Paris were sufficiently calm and pure for one to entrust her with omnipotence. How terrible would be the disaster if such an invention as mine should fall into the hands of a demented nation, possibly a dictator, some man of conquest, who would simply employ it to terrorize other nations and reduce them to slavery. . . . Ah! no, I do not wish to perpetuate warfare, I wish to kill it."

Then in a clear firm voice he explained his new plan, in which Pierre was surprised to find some of the ideas which General de Bozonnet had one day laid before him in a very different spirit. Warfare was on the

road to extinction, threatened by its very excesses. In the old days of mercenaries, and afterwards with conscripts, the percentage of soldiers designated by chance, war had been a profession and a passion. But nowadays, when everybody is called upon to fight, none care to do so. By the logical force of things, the system of the whole nation in arms means the coming end of armies. How much longer will the nations remain on a footing of deadly peace, bowed down by ever increasing "estimates," spending millions and millions on holding one another in respect? Ah! how great the deliverance, what a cry of relief would go up on the day when some formidable engine, capable of destroying armies and sweeping cities away, should render war an impossibility and constrain every people to disarm! Warfare would be dead, killed in her own turn, she who has killed so many. This was Guillaume's dream, and he grew quite enthusiastic, so strong was his conviction that he would presently bring it to pass.

"Everything is settled," said he; "if I am about to die and disappear, it is in order that my idea may triumph. . . . You have lately seen me spend whole afternoons alone with Mère-Grand. Well, we were completing the classification of the documents and making our final arrangements. She has my orders, and will execute them even at the risk of her life, for none has a braver, loftier soul. . . . As soon as I am dead, buried beneath these stones, as soon as she has heard the explosion shake Paris and proclaim the advent of the new era, she will forward a set of all the documents I have confided to her — the formula

of my explosive, the drawings of the bomb and gun — to each of the great powers of the world. In this wise I shall bestow on all the nations the terrible gift of destruction and omnipotence which, at first, I wished to bestow on France alone; and I do this in order that the nations, being one and all armed with the thunderbolt, may at once disarm, for fear of being annihilated, when seeking to annihilate others."

Pierre listened to him, gaping, amazed at this extraordinary idea, in which childishness was blended with genius. "Well," said he, "if you give your secret to all the nations, why should you blow up this church, and die yourself?"

"Why! In order that I may be believed!" cried Guillaume with extraordinary force of utterance. Then he added, "The edifice must lie on the ground, and I must be under it. If the experiment is not made, if universal horror does not attest and proclaim the amazing destructive power of my explosive, people will consider me a mere schemer, a visionary! . . . A lot of dead, a lot of blood, that is what is needed in order that blood may for ever cease to flow!" Then, with a broad sweep of his arm, he again declared that his action was necessary. "Besides," he said, "Salvat left me the legacy of carrying out this deed of justice. If I have given it greater scope and significance, utilising it as a means of hastening the end of war, this is because I happen to be a man of intellect. It would have been better possibly if my mind had been a simple one, and if I had merely acted like some volcano which changes the soil, leaving life the task of renewing humanity."

Much of the candle had now burnt away, and Guillaume at last rose from the block of stone. He had again consulted his watch, and found that he had ten minutes left him. The little current of air created by his gestures made the light flicker, while all around him the darkness seemed to grow denser. And near at hand ever lay the threatening open mine which a spark might at any moment fire.

"It is nearly time," said Guillaume. "Come, brother, kiss me and go away. You know how much I love you, what ardent affection for you has been awakened in my old heart. So love me in like fashion, and find love enough to let me die as I want to die, in carrying out my duty. Kiss me, kiss me, and go away without turning your head."

His deep affection for Pierre made his voice tremble, but he struggled on, forced back his tears, and ended by conquering himself. It was as if he were no longer of the world, no longer one of mankind.

"No, brother, you have not convinced me," said Pierre, who on his side did not seek to hide his tears, "and it is precisely because I love you as you love me, with my whole being, my whole soul, that I cannot go away. It is impossible! You cannot be the madman, the murderer you would try to be."

"Why not? Am I not free. I have rid my life of all responsibilities, all ties. . . . I have brought up my sons, they have no further need of me. But one heart-link remained — Marie, and I have given her to you."

At this a disturbing argument occurred to Pierre, and he passionately availed himself of it. "So you

want to die because you have given me Marie," said he. "You still love her, confess it!"

"No!" cried Guillaume, "I no longer love her, I swear it. I gave her to you. I love her no more."

"So you fancied; but you can see now that you still love her, for here you are, quite upset; whereas none of the terrifying things of which we spoke just now could even move you. . . . Yes, if you wish to die it is because you have lost Marie!"

Guillaume quivered, shaken by what his brother said, and in low, broken words he tried to question himself. "No, no, that any love pain should have urged me to this terrible deed would be unworthy — unworthy of my great design. No, no, I decided on it in the free exercise of my reason, and I am accomplishing it from no personal motive, but in the name of justice and for the benefit of humanity, in order that war and want may cease."

Then, in sudden anguish, he went on: "Ah! it is cruel of you, brother, cruel of you to poison my delight at dying. I have created all the happiness I could, I was going off well pleased at leaving you all happy, and now you poison my death. No, no! question it how I may, my heart does not ache; if I love Marie, it is simply in the same way as I love you."

Nevertheless, he remained perturbed, as if fearing lest he might be lying to himself; and by degrees gloomy anger came over him: "Listen, that is enough, Pierre," he exclaimed, "time is flying. . . . For the last time, go away! I order you to do so; I will have it!"

"I will not obey you, Guillaume. . . . I will stay,

and as all my reasoning cannot save you from your insanity, fire your mine, and I will die with you."

"You? Die? But you have no right to do so, you are not free!"

"Free, or not, I swear that I will die with you. And if it merely be a question of flinging this candle into that hole, tell me so, and I will take it and fling it there myself."

He made a gesture at which his brother thought that he was about to carry out his threat. So he caught him by the arm, crying: "Why should you die? It would be absurd. That others should die may be necessary, but you, no! Of what use could be this additional monstrosity? You are endeavouring to soften me, you are torturing my heart!" Then all at once, imagining that Pierre's offer had concealed another design, Guillaume thundered in a fury: "You don't want to take the candle in order to throw it there. What you want to do is to blow it out! And you think I shan't be able then—ah! you bad brother!"

In his turn Pierre exclaimed: "Oh! certainly, I'll use every means to prevent you from accomplishing such a frightful and foolish deed!"

"You'll prevent me!"

"Yes, I'll cling to you, I'll fasten my arms to your shoulders, I'll hold your hands if necessary."

"Ah! you'll prevent me, you bad brother! You think you'll prevent me!"

Choking and trembling with rage, Guillaume had already caught hold of Pierre, pressing his ribs with his powerful muscular arms. They were closely linked

together, their eyes fixed upon one another, and their breath mingling in that kind of subterranean dungeon, where their big dancing shadows looked like ghosts. They seemed to be vanishing into the night, the candle now showed merely like a little yellow tear in the midst of the darkness; and at that moment, in those far depths, a quiver sped through the silence of the earth which weighed so heavily upon them. Distant but sonorous peals rang out, as if death itself were somewhere ringing its invisible bell.

"You hear," stammered Guillaume, "it's their bell up there. The time has come. I have vowed to act, and you want to prevent me!"

"Yes, I'll prevent you as long as I'm here alive."

"As long as you are alive, you'll prevent me!"

Guillaume could hear "La Savoyarde" pealing joyfully up yonder; he could see the triumphant basilica, overflowing with its ten thousand pilgrims, and blazing with the splendour of the Host amidst the smoke of incense; and blind frenzy came over him at finding himself unable to act, at finding an obstacle suddenly barring the road to his fixed idea.

"As long as you are alive, as long as you are alive!" he repeated, beside himself. "Well, then, die, you wretched brother!"

A fratricidal gleam had darted from his blurred eyes. He hastily stooped, picked up a large brick forgotten there, and raised it with both hands as if it were a club.

"Ah! I'm willing," cried Pierre. "Kill me, then; kill your own brother before you kill the others!"

The brick was already descending, but Guillaume's arms must have deviated, for the weapon only grazed one of Pierre's shoulders. Nevertheless, he sank upon his knees in the gloom. When Guillaume saw him there he fancied he had dealt him a mortal blow. What was it that had happened between them, what had he done? For a moment he remained standing, haggard, his mouth open, his eyes dilating with terror. He looked at his hands, fancying that blood was streaming from them. Then he pressed them to his brow, which seemed to be bursting with pain, as if his fixed idea had been torn from him, leaving his skull open. And he himself suddenly sank upon the ground with a great sob.

"Oh! brother, little brother, what have I done?" he called. "I am a monster!"

But Pierre had passionately caught him in his arms again. "It is nothing, nothing, brother, I assure you," he replied. "Ah! you are weeping now. How pleased I am! You are saved, I can feel it, since you are weeping. And what a good thing it is that you flew into such a passion, for your anger with me has dispelled your evil dream of violence."

"I am horrified with myself," gasped Guillaume, "to think that I wanted to kill you! Yes, I'm a brute beast that would kill his brother! And the others, too, all the others up yonder. . . . Oh! I'm cold, I feel so cold."

His teeth were chattering, and he shivered. It was as if he had awakened, half stupefied, from some evil dream. And in the new light which his fratricidal deed cast upon things, the scheme which had haunted

him and goaded him to madness appeared like some act of criminal folly, projected by another.

"To kill you!" he repeated almost in a whisper. "I shall never forgive myself. My life is ended, I shall never find courage enough to live."

But Pierre clasped him yet more tightly. "What do you say?" he answered. "Will there not rather be a fresh and stronger tie of affection between us? Ah! yes, brother, let me save you as you saved me, and we shall be yet more closely united! Don't you remember that evening at Neuilly, when you consoled me and held me to your heart as I am holding you to mine? I had confessed my torments to you, and you told me that I must live and love! . . . And you did far more afterwards: you plucked your own love from your breast and gave it to me. You wished to ensure my happiness at the price of your own! And how delightful it is that, in my turn, I now have an opportunity to console you, save you, and bring you back to life!"

"No, no, the bloodstain is there and it is ineffaceable. I can hope no more!"

"Yes, yes, you can. Hope in life as you bade me do! Hope in love and hope in labour!"

Still weeping and clasping one another, the brothers continued speaking in low voices. The expiring candle suddenly went out unknown to them, and in the inky night and deep silence their tears of redeeming affection flowed freely. On the one hand, there was joy at being able to repay a debt of brotherliness, and on the other, acute emotion at having been led by a fanatical love of justice and mankind to the very verge

of crime. And there were yet other things in the depths of those tears which cleansed and purified them; there were protests against suffering in every form, and ardent wishes that the world might some day be relieved of all its dreadful woe.

At last, after pushing the flagstone over the cavity near the pillar, Pierre groped his way out of the vault, leading Guillaume like a child.

Meantime Mère-Grand, still seated near the window of the workroom, had impassively continued sewing. Now and again, pending the arrival of four o'clock, she had looked up at the timepiece hanging on the wall on her left hand, or else had glanced out of the window towards the unfinished pile of the basilica, which a gigantic framework of scaffoldings encompassed. Slowly and steadily plying her needle, the old lady remained very pale and silent, but full of heroic serenity. On the other hand, Marie, who sat near her, embroidering, shifted her position a score of times, broke her thread, and grew impatient, feeling strangely nervous, a prey to unaccountable anxiety, which oppressed her heart. For their part, the three young men could not keep in place at all; it was as if some contagious fever disturbed them. Each had gone to his work: Thomas was filing something at his bench; François and Antoine were on either side of their table, the first trying to solve a mathematical problem, and the other copying a bunch of poppies in a vase before him. It was in vain, however, that they strove to be attentive. They quivered at the slightest sound, raised their heads, and darted questioning glances at one another. What could be the matter? What could

possess them? What did they fear? Now and again one or the other would rise, stretch himself, and then resume his place. However, they did not speak; it was as if they dared not say anything, and thus the heavy silence grew more and more terrible.

When it was a few minutes to four o'clock Mère-Grand felt weary, or else desired to collect her thoughts. After another glance at the timepiece, she let her needlework fall on her lap and turned towards the basilica. It seemed to her that she had only enough strength left to wait; and she remained with her eyes fixed on the huge walls and the forest of scaffolding which rose over yonder with such triumphant pride under the blue sky. Then all at once, however brave and firm she might be, she could not restrain a start, for "La Savoyarde" had raised a joyful clang. The consecration of the Host was now at hand, the ten thousand pilgrims filled the church, four o'clock was about to strike. And thereupon an irresistible impulse forced the old lady to her feet; she drew herself up, quivering, her hands clasped, her eyes ever turned yonder, waiting in mute dread.

"What is the matter?" cried Thomas, who noticed her. "Why are you trembling, Mère-Grand?"

François and Antoine raised their heads, and in turn sprang forward.

"Are you ill? Why are you turning so pale, you who are so courageous?"

But she did not answer. Ah! might the force of the explosion rend the earth asunder, reach the house and sweep it into the flaming crater of the volcano! Might she and the three young men, might they all

die with the father, this was her one ardent wish in order that grief might be spared them. And she remained waiting and waiting, quivering despite herself, but with her brave, clear eyes ever gazing yonder.

"Mère-Grand, Mère-Grand!" cried Marie in dismay; "you frighten us by refusing to answer us, by looking over there as if some misfortune were coming up at a gallop!"

Then, prompted by the same anguish, the same cry suddenly came from Thomas, François and Antoine: "Father is in peril — father is going to die!"

What did they know? Nothing precise, certainly. Thomas no doubt had been astonished to see what a large quantity of the explosive his father had recently prepared, and both François and Antoine were aware of the ideas of revolt which he harboured in his mind. But, full of filial deference, they never sought to know anything beyond what he might choose to confide to them. They never questioned him; they bowed to whatever he might do. And yet now a foreboding came to them, a conviction that their father was going to die, that some most frightful catastrophe was impending. It must have been that which had already sent such a quiver through the atmosphere ever since the morning, making them shiver with fever, feel ill at ease, and unable to work.

"Father is going to die, father is going to die!"

The three big fellows had drawn close together, distracted by one and the same anguish, and furiously longing to know what the danger was, in order that they might rush upon it and die with their father if they could not save him. And amidst Mère-Grand's

stubborn silence death once more flitted through the room: there came a cold gust such as they had already felt brushing past them during *déjeuner*.

At last four o'clock began to strike, and Mère-Grand raised her white hands with a gesture of supreme entreaty. It was then that she at last spoke: "Father is going to die. Nothing but the duty of living can save him."

At this the three young men again wished to rush yonder, whither they knew not; but they felt that they must throw down all obstacles and conquer. Their powerlessness rent their hearts, they were both so frantic and so woful that their grandmother strove to calm them. "Father's own wish was to die," said she, "and he is resolved to die alone."

They shuddered as they heard her, and then, on their side, strove to be heroic. But the minutes crept by, and it seemed as if the cold gust had slowly passed away. Sometimes, at the twilight hour, a night-bird will come in by the window like some messenger of misfortune, flit round the darkened room, and then fly off again, carrying its sadness with it. And it was much like that; the gust passed, the basilica remained standing, the earth did not open to swallow it. Little by little the atrocious anguish which wrung their hearts gave place to hope. And when at last Guillaume appeared, followed by Pierre, a great cry of resurrection came from one and all: "Father!"

Their kisses, their tears, deprived him of his little remaining strength. He was obliged to sit down. He had glanced round him as if he were returning to life perforce. Mère-Grand, who understood what

bitter feelings must have followed the subjugation of his will, approached him smiling, and took hold of both his hands as if to tell him that she was well pleased at seeing him again, and at finding that he accepted his task and was unwilling to desert the cause of life. For his part he suffered dreadfully, the shock had been so great. The others spared him any narrative of their feelings; and he, himself, related nothing. With a gesture, a loving word, he simply indicated that it was Pierre who had saved him.

Thereupon, in a corner of the room, Marie flung her arms round the young man's neck. "Ah! my good Pierre, I have never yet kissed you," said she; "I want it to be for something serious the first time. . . . I love you, my good Pierre, I love you with all my heart."

Later that same evening, after night had fallen, Guillaume and Pierre remained for a moment alone in the big workroom. The young men had gone out, and Mère-Grand and Marie were upstairs sorting some house linen, while Madame Mathis, who had brought some work back, sat patiently in a dim corner waiting for another bundle of things which might require mending. The brothers, steeped in the soft melancholy of the twilight hour, and chatting in low tones, had quite forgotten her.

But all at once the arrival of a visitor upset them. It was Janzen with the fair, Christ-like face. He called very seldom nowadays; and one never knew from what gloomy spot he had come or into what darkness he would return when he took his departure.

He disappeared, indeed, for months together, and was then suddenly to be seen like some momentary passer-by whose past and present life were alike unknown.

"I am leaving to-night," he said in a voice sharp like a knife.

"Are you going back to your home in Russia?" asked Guillaume.

A faint, disdainful smile appeared on the Anarchist's lips. "Home!" said he, "I am at home everywhere. To begin with, I am not a Russian, and then I recognise no other country than the world."

With a sweeping gesture he gave them to understand what manner of man he was, one who had no fatherland of his own, but carried his gory dream of fraternity hither and thither regardless of frontiers. From some words he spoke the brothers fancied he was returning to Spain, where some fellow-Anarchists awaited him. There was a deal of work to be done there, it appeared. He had quietly seated himself, chatting on in his cold way, when all at once he serenely added: "By the by, a bomb had just been thrown into the Café de l'Univers on the Boulevard. Three *bourgeois* were killed."

Pierre and Guillaume shuddered, and asked for particulars. Thereupon Janzen related that he had happened to be there, had heard the explosion, and seen the windows of the café shivered to atoms. Three customers were lying on the floor blown to pieces. Two of them were gentlemen, who had entered the place by chance and whose names were not known, while the third was a regular customer, a petty cit of the neighbourhood, who came every day to play a game

at dominoes. And the whole place was wrecked; the marble tables were broken, the chandeliers twisted out of shape, the mirrors studded with projectiles. And how great the terror and the indignation, and how frantic the rush of the crowd! The perpetrator of the deed had been arrested immediately — in fact, just as he was turning the corner of the Rue Caumartin.

“I thought I would come and tell you of it,” concluded Janzen; “it is well you should know it.”

Then as Pierre, shuddering and already suspecting the truth, asked him if he knew who the man was that had been arrested, he slowly replied: “The worry is that you happen to know him — it was little Victor Mathis.”

Pierre tried to silence Janzen too late. He had suddenly remembered that Victor’s mother had been sitting in a dark corner behind them a short time previously. Was she still there? Then he again pictured Victor, slight and almost beardless, with a straight, stubborn brow, grey eyes glittering with intelligence, a pointed nose and thin lips expressive of stern will and unforgiving hatred. He was no simple and lowly one from the ranks of the disinherited. He was an educated scion of the *bourgeoisie*, and but for circumstances would have entered the *École Normale*. There was no excuse for his abominable deed, there was no political passion, no humanitarian insanity, in it. He was the destroyer pure and simple, the theoretician of destruction, the cold energetic man of intellect who gave his cultivated mind to arguing the cause of murder, in his desire to make murder an instrument of the social evolution. True, he was also a poet, a visionary,

but the most frightful of all visionaries: a monster whose nature could only be explained by mad pride, and who craved for the most awful immortality, dreaming that the coming dawn would rise from the arms of the guillotine. Only one thing could surpass him: the scythe of death which blindly mows the world.

For a few seconds, amidst the growing darkness, cold horror reigned in the workroom. "Ah!" muttered Guillaume, "he had the daring to do it, he had."

Pierre, however, lovingly pressed his arm. And he felt that he was as distracted, as upset, as himself. Perhaps this last abomination had been needed to ravage and cure him.

Janzen no doubt had been an accomplice in the deed. He was relating that Victor's purpose had been to avenge Salvat, when all at once a great sigh of pain was heard in the darkness, followed by a heavy thud upon the floor. It was Madame Mathis falling like a bundle, overwhelmed by the news which chance had brought her. At that moment it so happened that Mère-Grand came down with a lamp, which lighted up the room, and thereupon they hurried to the help of the wretched woman, who lay there as pale as a corpse in her flimsy black gown.

And this again brought Pierre an indescribable heart-pang. Ah! the poor, sad, suffering creature! He remembered her at Abbé Rose's, so discreet, so shamefaced, in her poverty, scarce able to live upon the slender resources which persistent misfortunes had left her. Hers had indeed been a cruel lot: first, a home with wealthy parents in the provinces, a love story and elopement with the man of her choice;

next, ill-luck steadily pursuing her, all sorts of home troubles, and at last her husband's death. Then, in the retirement of her widowhood, after losing the best part of the little income which had enabled her to bring up her son, naught but this son had been left to her. He had been her Victor, her sole affection, the only one in whom she had faith. She had ever striven to believe that he was very busy, absorbed in work, and on the eve of attaining to some superb position worthy of his merits. And now, all at once, she had learnt that this fondly loved son was simply the most odious of assassins, that he had flung a bomb into a café, and had there killed three men.

When Madame Mathis had recovered her senses, thanks to the careful tending of Mère-Grand, she sobbed on without cessation, raising such a continuous doleful wail, that Pierre's hand again sought Guillaume's, and grasped it, whilst their hearts, distracted but healed, mingled lovingly one with the other.

V

LIFE'S WORK AND PROMISE

FIFTEEN months later, one fine golden day in September, Bache and Théophile Morin were taking *déjeuner* at Guillaume's, in the big workroom overlooking the immensity of Paris.

Near the table was a cradle with its little curtains drawn. Behind them slept Jean, a fine boy four months old, the son of Pierre and Marie. The latter, simply in order to protect the child's social rights, had been married civilly at the town-hall of Montmartre. Then, by way of pleasing Guillaume, who wished to keep them with him, and thus enlarge the family circle, they had continued living in the little lodging over the work-shop, leaving the sleepy house at Neuilly in the charge of Sophie, Pierre's old servant. And life had been flowing on happily for the fourteen months or so that they had now belonged to one another.

There was simply peace, affection and work around the young couple. François, who had left the École Normale provided with every degree, every diploma, was now about to start for a college in the west of France, so as to serve his term of probation as a professor, intending to resign his post afterwards and devote himself, if he pleased, to science pure and simple.

Then Antoine had lately achieved great success with a series of engravings he had executed — some views and scenes of Paris life; and it was settled that he was to marry Lise Jahan in the ensuing spring, when she would have completed her seventeenth year. Of the three sons, however, Thomas was the most triumphant, for he had at last devised and constructed his little motor, thanks to a happy idea of his father's. One morning, after the downfall of all his huge chimerical schemes, Guillaume, remembering the terrible explosive which he had discovered and hitherto failed to utilise, had suddenly thought of employing it as a motive force, in the place of petroleum, in the motor which his eldest son had so long been trying to construct for the Grandidier works. So he had set to work with Thomas, devising a new mechanism, encountering endless difficulties, and labouring for a whole year before reaching success. But now the father and son had accomplished their task; the marvel was created, and stood there riveted to an oak stand, and ready to work as soon as its final toilet should have been performed.

Amidst all the changes which had occurred, Mère-Grand, in spite of her great age, continued exercising her active, silent sway over the household, which was now again so gay and peaceful. Though she seldom seemed to leave her chair in front of her work-table, she was really here, there and everywhere. Since the birth of Jean, she had talked of rearing the child in the same way as she had formerly reared Thomas, François and Antoine. She was indeed full of the bravery of devotion, and seemed to think that she

was not at all likely to die so long as she might have others to guide, love and save. Marie marvelled at it all. She herself, though she was always gay and in good health, felt tired at times now that she was suckling her infant. Little Jean indeed had two vigilant mothers near his cradle; whilst his father, Pierre, who had become Thomas's assistant, pulled the bellows, roughened out pieces of metal, and generally completed his apprenticeship as a working mechanician.

On the particular day when Bache and Théophile Morin came to Montmartre, the *déjeuner* proved even gayer than usual, thanks perhaps to their presence. The meal was over, the table had been cleared, and the coffee was being served, when a little boy, the son of a doorkeeper in the Rue Cortot, came to ask for Monsieur Pierre Froment. When they inquired his business, he answered in a hesitating way that Monsieur l'Abbé Rose was very ill, indeed dying, and that he had sent him to fetch Monsieur Pierre Froment at once.

Pierre followed the lad, feeling much affected; and on reaching the Rue Cortot he there found Abbé Rose in a little damp ground-floor room overlooking a strip of garden. The old priest was in bed, dying as the boy had said, but he still retained the use of his faculties, and could speak in his wonted slow and gentle voice. A Sister of Charity was watching beside him, and she seemed so surprised and anxious at the arrival of a visitor whom she did not know, that Pierre understood she was there to guard the dying man and prevent him from having intercourse with others. The

old priest must have employed some stratagem in order to send the doorkeeper's boy to fetch him. However, when Abbé Rose in his grave and kindly way begged the Sister to leave them alone for a moment, she dared not refuse this supreme request, but immediately left the room.

"Ah! my dear child," said the old man, "how much I wanted to speak to you! Sit down there, close to the bed, so that you may be able to hear me, for this is the end; I shall no longer be here to-night. And I have such a great service to ask of you."

Quite upset at finding his friend so wasted, with his face white like a sheet, and scarce a sign of life save the sparkle of his innocent, loving eyes, Pierre responded: "But I would have come sooner if I had known you were in need of me! Why did you not send for me before? Are people being kept away from you?"

A faint smile of shame and confession appeared on the old priest's embarrassed face. "Well, my dear child," said he, "you must know that I have again done some foolish things. Yes, I gave money to some people who, it seems, were not deserving of it. In fact, there was quite a scandal; they scolded me at the Archbishop's palace, and accused me of compromising the interests of religion. And when they heard that I was ill, they put that good Sister beside me, because they said that I should die on the floor, and give the very sheets off my bed if I were not prevented."

He paused to draw breath, and then continued: "So you understand, that good Sister — oh! she is a

very saintly woman — is here to nurse me and prevent me from still doing foolish things. To overcome her vigilance I had to use a little deceit, for which God, I trust, will forgive me. As it happens, it's precisely my poor who are in question; it was to speak to you about them that I so particularly wished to see you."

Tears had come to Pierre's eyes. "Tell me what you want me to do," he answered; "I am yours, both heart and soul."

"Yes, yes, I know it, my dear child. It was for that reason that I thought of you—you alone. In spite of all that has happened, you are the only one in whom I have any confidence, who can understand me, and give me a promise which will enable me to die in peace."

This was the only allusion he would venture to make to the cruel rupture which had occurred after the young man had thrown off his cassock and rebelled against the Church. He had since heard of Pierre's marriage, and was aware that he had for ever severed all religious ties. But at that supreme moment nothing of this seemed of any account to the old priest. His knowledge of Pierre's loving heart sufficed him, for all that he now desired was simply the help of that heart which he had seen glowing with such passionate charity.

"Well," he resumed, again finding sufficient strength to smile, "it is a very simple matter. I want to make you my heir. Oh! it isn't a fine legacy I am leaving you; it is the legacy of my poor, for I have nothing else to bestow on you; I shall leave nothing behind me but my poor."

Of these unhappy creatures, three in particular quite upset his heart. He recoiled from the prospect of leaving them without chance of succour, without even the crumbs which he had hitherto distributed among them, and which had enabled them to live. One was the big Old'un, the aged carpenter whom he and Pierre had vainly sought one night with the object of sending him to the Asylum for the Invalids of Labour. He had been sent there a little later, but he had fled three days afterwards, unwilling as he was to submit to the regulations. Wild and violent, he had the most detestable disposition. Nevertheless, he could not be left to starve. He came to Abbé Rose's every Saturday, it seemed, and received a franc, which sufficed him for the whole week. Then, too, there was a bedridden old woman in a hovel in the Rue du Mont-Cenis. The baker, who every morning took her the bread she needed, must be paid. And in particular there was a poor young woman residing on the Place du Tertre, one who was unmarried but a mother. She was dying of consumption, unable to work, and tortured by the idea that when she should have gone, her daughter must sink to the pavement like herself. And in this instance the legacy was twofold: there was the mother to relieve until her death, which was near at hand, and then the daughter to provide for until she could be placed in some good household.

"You must forgive me, my dear child, for leaving you all these worries," added Abbé Rose. "I tried to get the good Sister, who is nursing me, to take an interest in these poor people, but when I spoke to her

of the big Old'un, she was so alarmed that she made the sign of the cross. And it's the same with my worthy friend Abbé Tavernier. I know nobody of more upright mind. Still I shouldn't be at ease with him, he has ideas of his own. . . . And so, my dear child, there is only you whom I can rely upon, and you must accept my legacy if you wish me to depart in peace."

Pierre was weeping. "Ah! certainly, with my whole soul," he answered. "I shall regard your desires as sacred."

"Good! I knew you would accept. . . . So it is agreed: a franc for the big Old'un every Saturday, the bread for the bedridden woman, some help for the poor young mother, and then a home for her little girl. Ah! if you only knew what a weight it is off my heart! The end may come now, it will be welcome to me."

His kind white face had brightened as if with supreme joy. Holding Pierre's hand within his own he detained him beside the bed, exchanging a farewell full of serene affection. And his voice weakening, he expressed his whole mind in faint, impressive accents: "Yes, I shall be pleased to go off. I could do no more, I could do no more! Though I gave and gave, I felt that it was ever necessary to give more and more. And how sad to find charity powerless, to give without hope of ever being able to stamp out want and suffering! I rebelled against that idea of yours, as you will remember. I told you that we should always love one another in our poor, and that was true, since you are here, so good and affectionate to me and those whom I am

leaving behind. But, all the same, I can do no more, I can do no more; and I would rather go off, since the woes of others rise higher and higher around me, and I have ended by doing the most foolish things, scandalising the faithful and making my superiors indignant with me, without even saving one single poor person from the ever-growing torrent of want. Farewell, my dear child. My poor old heart goes off aching, my old hands are weary and conquered."

Pierre embraced him with his whole soul, and then departed. His eyes were full of tears and indescribable emotion wrung his heart. Never had he heard a more woful cry than that confession of the impotence of charity, on the part of that old candid child, whose heart was all simplicity and sublime benevolence. Ah! what a disaster, that human kindness should be futile, that the world should always display so much distress and suffering in spite of all the compassionate tears that had been shed, in spite of all the alms that had fallen from millions and millions of hands for centuries and centuries! No wonder that it should bring desire for death, no wonder that a Christian should feel pleased at escaping from the abominations of this earth!

When Pierre again reached the workroom he found that the table had long since been cleared, and that Bache and Morin were chatting with Guillaume, whilst the latter's sons had returned to their customary occupations. Marie, also, had resumed her usual place at the work-table in front of Mère-Grand; but from time to time she rose and went to look at Jean, so as to make sure that he was sleeping peacefully, with his

little clenched fists pressed to his heart. And when Pierre, who kept his emotion to himself, had likewise leant over the cradle beside the young woman, whose hair he discreetly kissed, he went to put on an apron in order that he might assist Thomas, who was now, for the last time, regulating his motor.

Then, as Pierre stood there awaiting an opportunity to help, the room vanished from before his eyes; he ceased to see or hear the persons who were there. The scent of Marie's hair alone lingered on his lips amidst the acute emotion into which he had been thrown by his visit to Abbé Rose. A recollection had come to him, that of the bitterly cold morning when the old priest had stopped him outside the basilica of the Sacred Heart, and had timidly asked him to take some alms to that old man Laveuve, who soon afterwards had died of want, like a dog by the wayside. How sad a morning it had been; what battle and torture had Pierre not felt within him, and what a resurrection had come afterwards! He had that day said one of his last masses, and he recalled with a shudder his abominable anguish, his despairing doubts at the thought of nothingness. Two experiments which he had previously made had failed most miserably. First had come one at Lourdes, where the glorification of the absurd had simply filled him with pity for any such attempt to revert to the primitive faith of young nations, who bend beneath the terror born of ignorance; and, secondly, there had been an experiment at Rome, which he had found incapable of any renewal, and which he had seen staggering to its death amidst its ruins, a mere great shadow, which

would soon be of no account, fast sinking, as it was, to the dust of dead religions. And, in his own mind, Charity itself had become bankrupt; he no longer believed that alms could cure the sufferings of mankind, he awaited naught but a frightful catastrophe, fire and massacre, which would sweep away the guilty, condemned world. His cassock, too, stifled him, a lie alone kept it on his shoulders, the idea, unbelieving priest though he was, that he could honestly and chastely watch over the belief of others. The problem of a new religion, a new hope, such as was needful to ensure the peace of the coming democracies tortured him, but between the certainties of science and the need of the Divine, which seemed to consume humanity, he could find no solution. If Christianity crumbled with the principle of Charity, there could remain nothing else but Justice, that cry which came from every breast, that battle of Justice against Charity in which his heart must contend in that great city of Paris. It was there that began his third and decisive experiment, the experiment which was to make truth as plain to him as the sun itself, and give him back health and strength and delight in life.

At this point of his reverie Pierre was roused by Thomas, who asked him to fetch a tool. As he did so he heard Bache remarking: "The ministry resigned this morning. Vignon has had enough of it, he wants to reserve his remaining strength."

"Well, he has lasted more than a twelvemonth," replied Morin. "That's already an achievement."

After the crime of Victor Mathis, who had been tried and executed within three weeks, Monferrand

had suddenly fallen from power. What was the use of having a strong-handed man at the head of the Government if bombs still continued to terrify the country? Moreover, he had displeased the Chamber by his voracious appetite, which had prevented him from allowing others more than an infinitesimal share of all the good things. And this time he had been succeeded by Vignon, although the latter's programme of reforms had long made people tremble. He, Vignon, was honest certainly, but of all these reforms he had only been able to carry out a few insignificant ones, for he had found himself hampered by a thousand obstacles. And thus he had resigned himself to ruling the country as others had done; and people had discovered that after all there were but faint shades of difference between him and Monferrand.

"You know that Monferrand is being spoken of again?" said Guillaume.

"Yes, and he has some chance of success. His creatures are bestirring themselves tremendously," replied Bache, adding, in a bitter, jesting way, that Mège, the Collectivist leader, played the part of a dupe in overthrowing ministry after ministry. He simply gratified the ambition of each coterie in turn, without any possible chance of attaining to power himself.

Thereupon Guillaume pronounced judgment. "Oh! well, let them devour one another," said he. "Eager as they all are to reign and dispose of power and wealth, they only fight over questions of persons. And nothing they do can prevent the evolution from continuing. Ideas expand, and events occur, and,

over and above everything else, mankind is marching on."

Pierre was greatly struck by these words, and he again recalled the past. His dolorous Parisian experiment had begun, and he was once more roaming through the city. Paris seemed to him to be a huge vat, in which a world fermented, something of the best and something of the worst, a frightful mixture such as sorceresses might have used; precious powders mingled with filth, from all of which was to come the philter of love and eternal youth. And in that vat Pierre first marked the scum of the political world: Monferrand who strangled Barroux, who purchased the support of hungry ones such as Fonsèque, Duthil and Chaigneux, who made use of those who attained to mediocrity, such as Taboureau and Dauvergne; and who employed even the sectarian passions of Mège and the intelligent ambition of Vignon as his weapons. Next came money the poisoner, with that affair of the African Railways, which had rotted the Parliament and turned Duvillard, the triumphant *bourgeois*, into a public perverter, the very cancer as it were of the financial world. Then as a just consequence of all this there was Duvillard's own home infected by himself, that frightful drama of Eve contending with her daughter Camille for the possession of Gérard, then Camille stealing him from her mother, and Hyacinthe, the son, passing his crazy mistress Rosemonde on to that notorious harlot Silviane, with whom his father publicly exhibited himself. Then there was the old expiring aristocracy, with the pale, sad faces of Madame de Quinsac and the Marquis de

Morigny; the old military spirit whose funeral was conducted by General de Bozonnet; the magistracy which slavishly served the powers of the day, Amadieu thrusting himself into notoriety by means of sensational cases, Lehmann, the public prosecutor, preparing his speeches in the private room of the Minister whose policy he defended; and, finally, the mendacious and cupid Press which lived upon scandal, the everlasting flood of denunciation and filth which poured from Sagnier, and the gay impudence shown by the unscrupulous and conscienceless Massot, who attacked all and defended all, by profession and to order! And in the same way as insects, on discovering one of their own kind dying, will often finish it off and fatten upon it, so the whole swarm of appetites, interests and passions had fallen upon a wretched madman, that unhappy Salvat, whose idiotic crime had brought them all scrambling together, gluttonously eager to derive some benefit from that starveling's emaciated carcass. And all boiled in the huge vat of Paris; the desires, the deeds of violence, the strivings of one and another man's will, the whole nameless medley of the bitterest ferments, whence, in all purity, the wine of the future would at last flow.

Then Pierre became conscious of the prodigious work which went on in the depths of the vat, beneath all the impurity and waste. As his brother had just said, what mattered the stains, the egotism and greed of politicians, if humanity were still on the march, ever slowly and stubbornly stepping forward! What mattered, too, that corrupt and emasculate *bourgeoisie*, nowadays as moribund as the aristocracy, whose place

it took, if behind it there ever came the inexhaustible reserve of men who surged up from the masses of the country-sides and the towns! What mattered the debauchery, the perversion arising from excess of wealth and power, the luxuriousness and dissoluteness of life, since it seemed a proven fact that the capitals that had been queens of the world had never reigned without extreme civilisation, a cult of beauty and of pleasure! And what mattered even the venality, the transgressions and the folly of the press, if at the same time it remained an admirable instrument for the diffusion of knowledge, the open conscience, so to say, of the nation, a river which, though there might be horrors on its surface, none the less flowed on, carrying all nations to the brotherly ocean of the future centuries! The human lees ended by sinking to the bottom of the vat, and it was not possible to expect that what was right would triumph visibly every day; for it was often necessary that years should elapse before the realisation of some hope could emerge from the fermentation. Eternal matter is ever being cast afresh into the crucible and ever coming from it improved. And if in the depths of pestilential workshops and factories the slavery of ancient times subsists in the wage-earning system, if such men as Toussaint still die of want on their pallets like broken-down beasts of burden, it is nevertheless a fact that once already, on a memorable day of tempest, Liberty sprang forth from the vat to wing her flight throughout the world. And why in her turn should not Justice spring from it, proceeding from those troubled elements, freeing herself from all dross, flowing

forth with dazzling limpidity and regenerating the nations?

However, the voices of Bache and Morin, rising in the course of their chat with Guillaume, once more drew Pierre from his reverie. They were now speaking of Janzen, who after being compromised in a fresh outrage at Barcelona had fled from Spain. Bache fancied that he had recognised him in the street only the previous day. To think that a man with so clear a mind and such keen energy should waste his natural gifts in such a hateful cause!

"When I remember," said Morin slowly, "that Barthès lives in exile in a shabby little room at Brussels, ever quivering with the hope that the reign of liberty is at hand—he who has never had a drop of blood on his hands and who has spent two-thirds of his life in prison in order that the nations may be freed!"

Bache gently shrugged his shoulders: "Liberty, liberty, of course," said he; "only it is worth nothing if it is not organised."

Thereupon their everlasting discussion began afresh, with Saint-Simon and Fourier on one side and Proudhon and Auguste Comte on the other. Bache gave a long account of the last commemoration which had taken place in honour of Fourier's memory, how faithful disciples had brought wreaths and made speeches, forming quite a meeting of apostles, who all stubbornly clung to their faith, as confident in the future as if they were the messengers of some new gospel. Afterwards Morin emptied his pockets, which were always full of Positivist tracts and pamphlets, mani-

festos, answers and so forth, in which Comte's doctrines were extolled as furnishing the only possible basis for the new, awaited religion. Pierre, who listened, thereupon remembered the disputes in his little house at Neuilly when he himself, searching for certainty, had endeavoured to draw up the century's balance-sheet. He had lost his depth, in the end, amidst the contradictions and incoherency of the various precursors. Although Fourier had sprung from Saint-Simon, he denied him in part, and if Saint-Simon's doctrine ended in a kind of mystical sensuality, the other's conducted to an unacceptable regimenting of society. Proudhon, for his part, demolished without rebuilding anything. Comte, who created method and declared science to be the one and only sovereign, had not even suspected the advent of the social crisis which now threatened to sweep all away, and had finished personally as a mere worshipper of love, overpowered by woman. Nevertheless, these two, Comte and Proudhon, entered the lists and fought against the others, Fourier and Saint-Simon; the combat between them or their disciples becoming so bitter and so blind that the truths common to them all at first seemed obscured and disfigured beyond recognition. Now, however, that evolution had slowly transformed Pierre, those common truths seemed to him as irrefutable, as clear as the sunlight itself. Amidst the chaos of conflicting assertions which was to be found in the gospels of those social messiahs, there were certain similar phrases and principles which recurred again and again, the defence of the poor, the idea of a new and just division of the riches

of the world in accordance with individual labour and merit, and particularly the search for a new law of labour which would enable this fresh distribution to be made equitably. Since all the precursory men of genius agreed so closely upon those points, must they not be the very foundations of to-morrow's new religion, the necessary faith which this century must bequeath to the coming century, in order that the latter may make of it a human religion of peace, solidarity and love?

Then, all at once, there came a leap in Pierre's thoughts. He fancied himself at the Madeleine once more, listening to the address on the New Spirit delivered by Monseigneur Martha, who had predicted that Paris, now reconverted to Christianity, would, thanks to the Sacred Heart, become the ruler of the world. But no, but no! If Paris reigned, it was because it was able to exercise its intelligence freely. To set the cross and the mystic and repulsive symbolism of a bleeding heart above it was simply so much falsehood. Although they might rear edifices of pride and domination as if to crush Paris with their very weight, although they might try to stop science in the name of a dead ideal and in the hope of setting their clutches upon the coming century, these attempts would be of no avail. Science will end by sweeping away all remnants of their ancient sovereignty, their basilica will crumble beneath the breeze of Truth without any necessity of raising a finger against it. The trial has been made, the Gospel as a social code has fallen to pieces, and human wisdom can only retain account of its moral maxims. Ancient Catholi-

cism is on all sides crumbling into dust, Catholic Rome is a mere field of ruins from which the nations turn aside, anxious as they are for a religion that shall not be a religion of death. In olden times the overburdened slave, glowing with a new hope and seeking to escape from his gaol, dreamt of a heaven where in return for his earthly misery he would be rewarded with eternal enjoyment. But now that science has destroyed that false idea of a heaven, and shown what dupery lies in reliance on the morrow of death, the slave, the workman, weary of dying for happiness' sake, demands that justice and happiness shall find place upon this earth. Therein lies the new hope — Justice, after eighteen hundred years of impotent Charity. Ah! in a thousand years from now, when Catholicism will be naught but a very ancient superstition of the past, how amazed men will be to think that their ancestors were able to endure that religion of torture and nihility! How astonished they will feel on finding that God was regarded as an executioner, that manhood was threatened, maimed and chastised, that nature was accounted an enemy, that life was looked upon as something accursed, and that death alone was pronounced sweet and liberating! For well-nigh two thousand years the onward march of mankind has been hampered by the odious idea of tearing all that is human away from man: his desires, his passions, his free intelligence, his will and right of action, his whole strength. And how glorious will be the awakening when such virginity as is now honoured by the Church is held in derision, when fruitfulness is again recognised as a virtue, amidst the

hosanna of all the freed forces of nature — man's desires which will be honoured, his passions which will be utilised, his labour which will be exalted, whilst life is loved and ever and ever creates love afresh!

A new religion! a new religion! Pierre remembered the cry which had escaped him at Lourdes, and which he had repeated at Rome in presence of the collapse of old Catholicism. But he no longer displayed the same feverish eagerness as then — a puerile, sickly desire that a new Divinity should at once reveal himself, an ideal come into being, complete in all respects, with dogmas and form of worship. The Divine certainly seemed to be as necessary to man as were bread and water; he had ever fallen back upon it, hungering for the mysterious, seemingly having no other means of consolation than that of annihilating himself in the unknown. But who can say that science will not some day quench the thirst for what lies beyond us? If the domain of science embraces the acquired truths, it also embraces, and will ever do so, the truths that remain to be acquired. And in front of it will there not ever remain a margin for the thirst of knowledge, for the hypotheses which are but so much ideality? Besides, is not the yearning for the divine simply a desire to behold the Divinity? And if science should more and more content the yearning to know all and be able to do all, will not that yearning be quieted and end by mingling with the love of acquired truth? A religion grafted on science is the indicated, certain, inevitable finish of man's long march towards knowledge. He will come to it at

last as to a natural haven, as to peace in the midst of certainty, after passing every form of ignorance and terror on his road. And is there not already some indication of such a religion? Has not the idea of the duality of God and the Universe been brushed aside, and is not the principle of unity, *monisme*, becoming more and more evident—unity leading to solidarity, and the sole law of life proceeding by evolution from the first point of the ether that condensed to create the world? But if precursors, scientists and philosophers—Darwin, Fourier and all the others—have sown the seed of to-morrow's religion by casting the good word to the passing breeze, how many centuries will doubtless be required to raise the crop! People always forget that before Catholicism grew up and reigned in the sunlight, it spent four centuries in germinating and sprouting from the soil. Well, then, grant some centuries to this religion of science of whose sprouting there are signs upon all sides, and by-and-by the admirable ideas of some Fourier will be seen expanding and forming a new gospel, with desire serving as the lever to raise the world, work accepted by one and all, honoured and regulated as the very mechanism of natural and social life, and the passions of man excited, contented and utilised for human happiness! The universal cry of Justice, which rises louder and louder, in a growing clamour from the once silent multitude, the people that have so long been duped and preyed upon, is but a cry for this happiness towards which human beings are tending, the happiness that embodies the complete satisfaction of man's needs, and the princi-

ple of life loved for its own sake, in the midst of peace and the expansion of every force and every joy. The time will come when this Kingdom of God will be set upon the earth; so why not close that other deceptive paradise, even if the weak-minded must momentarily suffer from the destruction of their illusions; for it is necessary to operate even with cruelty on the blind if they are to be extricated from their misery, from their long and frightful night of ignorance!

All at once a feeling of deep joy came over Pierre. A child's faint cry, the wakening cry of his son Jean had drawn him from his reverie. And he had suddenly remembered that he himself was now saved, freed from falsehood and fright, restored to good and healthy nature. How he quivered as he recalled that he had once fancied himself lost, blotted out of life, and that a prodigy of love had extricated him from his nothingness, still strong and sound, since that dear child of his was there, sturdy and smiling. Life had brought forth life; and truth had burst forth, as dazzling as the sun. He had made his third experiment with Paris, and this had been conclusive; it had been no wretched miscarriage with increase of darkness and grief, like his other experiments at Lourdes and Rome. In the first place, the law of labour had been revealed to him, and he had imposed upon himself a task, as humble a one as it was, that manual calling which he was learning so late in life, but which was, nevertheless, a form of labour, and one in which he would never fail, one too that would lend him the serenity which comes from the accomplishment of duty, for

life itself was but labour: it was only by effort that the world existed. And then, moreover, he had loved; and salvation had come to him from woman and from his child. Ah! what a long and circuitous journey he had made to reach this finish at once so natural and so simple! How he had suffered, how much error and anger he had known before doing what all men ought to do! That eager, glowing love which had contended against his reason, which had bled at sight of the arrant absurdities of the miraculous grotto of Lourdes, which had bled again too in presence of the haughty decline of the Vatican, had at last found contentment now that he was husband and father, now that he had confidence in work and believed in the just laws of life. And thence had come the indisputable truth, the one solution — happiness in certainty.

Whilst Pierre was thus plunged in thought, Bache and Morin had already gone off with their customary handshakes and promises to come and chat again some evening. And as Jean was now crying more loudly, Marie took him in her arms and unhooked her dress-body to give him her breast.

“Oh! the darling, it’s his time, you know, and he doesn’t forget it!” she said. “Just look, Pierre, I believe he has got bigger since yesterday.”

She laughed; and Pierre, likewise laughing, drew near to kiss the child. And afterwards he kissed his wife, mastered as he was by emotion at the sight of that pink, gluttonous little creature imbibing life from that lovely breast so full of milk.

“Why! he’ll eat you,” he gaily said to Marie. “How he’s pulling!”

"Oh! he does bite me a little," she replied; "but I like that the better, it shows that he profits by it."

Then Mère-Grand, she who as a rule was so serious and silent, began to talk with a smile lighting up her face: "I weighed him this morning," said she, "he weighs nearly a quarter of a pound more than he did the last time. And if you had only seen how good he was, the darling! He will be a very intelligent and well-behaved little gentleman, such as I like. When he's five years old, I shall teach him his alphabet, and when he's fifteen, if he likes, I'll tell him how to be a man. . . . Don't you agree with me, Thomas? And you, Antoine, and you, too, François?"

Raising their heads, the three sons gaily nodded their approval, grateful as they felt for the lessons in heroism which she had given them, and apparently finding no reason why she might not live another twenty years in order to give similar lessons to Jean.

Pierre still remained in front of Marie, basking in all the rapture of love, when he felt Guillaume lay his hands upon his shoulders from behind. And on turning round he saw that his brother was also radiant, like one who felt well pleased at seeing them so happy. "Ah! brother," said Guillaume softly, "do you remember my telling you that you suffered solely from the battle between your mind and your heart, and that you would find quietude again when you loved what you could understand? It was necessary that our father and mother, whose painful quarrel had continued beyond the grave, should be reconciled in you. And now it's done, they sleep in peace within you, since you yourself are pacified."

These words filled Pierre with emotion. Joy beamed upon his face, which was now so open and energetic. He still had the towering brow, that impregnable fortress of reason, which he had derived from his father, and he still had the gentle chin and affectionate eyes and mouth which his mother had given him, but all was now blended together, instinct with happy harmony and serene strength. Those two experiments of his which had miscarried, were like crises of his maternal heredity, the tearful tenderness which had come to him from his mother, and which for lack of satisfaction had made him desperate; and his third experiment had only ended in happiness because he had contented his ardent thirst for love in accordance with sovereign reason, that paternal heredity which pleaded so loudly within him. Reason remained the queen. And if his sufferings had thus always come from the warfare which his reason had waged against his heart, it was because he was man personified, ever struggling between his intelligence and his passions. And how peaceful all seemed, now that he had reconciled and satisfied them both, now that he felt healthy, perfect and strong, like some lofty oak, which grows in all freedom, and whose branches spread far away over the forest.

"You have done good work in that respect," Guillaume affectionately continued, "for yourself and for all of us, and even for our dear parents whose shades, pacified and reconciled, now abide so peacefully in the little home of our childhood. I often think of our dear house at Neuilly, which old Sophie is taking care of for us; and although, out of egotism, a desire

to set happiness around me, I wished to keep you here, your Jean must some day go and live there, so as to bring it fresh youth."

Pierre had taken hold of his brother's hands, and looking into his eyes he asked: "And you — are you happy?"

"Yes, very happy, happier than I have ever been; happy at loving you as I do, and happy at being loved by you as no one else will ever love me."

Their hearts mingled in ardent brotherly affection, the most perfect and heroic affection that can blend men together. And they embraced one another whilst, with her babe on her breast, Marie, so gay, healthful and loyal, looked at them and smiled, with big tears gathering in her eyes.

Thomas, however, having finished his motor's last toilet, had just set it in motion. It was a prodigy of lightness and strength, of no weight whatever in comparison with the power it displayed. And it worked with perfect smoothness, without noise or smell. The whole family was gathered round it in delight, when there came a timely visit, one from the learned and friendly Bertheroy, whom indeed Guillaume had asked to call, in order that he might see the motor working.

The great chemist at once expressed his admiration; and when he had examined the mechanism and understood how the explosive was employed as motive power — an idea which he had long recommended, — he tendered enthusiastic congratulations to Guillaume and Thomas. "You have created a little marvel," said he, "one which may have far-reaching effects both socially and humanly. Yes, yes, pending the

invention of the electrical motor which we have not yet arrived at, here is an ideal one, a system of mechanical traction for all sorts of vehicles. Even aerial navigation may now become a possibility, and the problem of force at home is finally solved. And what a grand step! What sudden progress! Distance again diminished, all roads thrown open, and men able to fraternise! This is a great boon, a splendid gift, my good friends, that you are bestowing on the world."

Then he began to jest about the new explosive, whose prodigious power he had divined, and which he now found put to such a beneficent purpose. "And to think, Guillaume," he said, "that I fancied you acted with so much mysteriousness and hid the formula of your powder from me because you had an idea of blowing up Paris!"

At this Guillaume became grave and somewhat pale. And he confessed the truth. "Well, I did for a moment think of it."

However, Bertheroy went on laughing, as if he regarded this answer as mere repartee, though truth to tell he had felt a slight chill sweep through his hair. "Well, my friend," he said, "you have done far better in offering the world this marvel, which by the way must have been both a difficult and dangerous matter. So here is a powder which was intended to exterminate people, and which in lieu thereof will now increase their comfort and welfare. In the long run things always end well, as I'm quite tired of saying."

On beholding such lofty and tolerant good nature, Guillaume felt moved. Bertheroy's words were true. What had been intended for purposes of destruction

served the cause of progress; the subjugated, domesticated volcano became labour, peace and civilisation. Guillaume had even relinquished all idea of his engine of battle and victory; he had found sufficient satisfaction in this last invention of his, which would relieve men of some measure of weariness, and help to reduce their labour to just so much effort as there must always be. In this he detected some little advance towards Justice; at all events it was all that he himself could contribute to the cause. And when on turning towards the window he caught sight of the basilica of the Sacred Heart, he could not explain what insanity had at one moment come over him, and set him dreaming of idiotic and useless destruction. Some miasmal gust must have swept by, something born of want that scattered germs of anger and vengeance. But how blind it was to think that destruction and murder could ever bear good fruit, ever sow the soil with plenty and happiness! Violence cannot last, and all it does is to rouse man's feeling of solidarity even among those on whose behalf one kills. The people, the great multitude, rebel against the isolated individual who seeks to wreak justice. No one man can take upon himself the part of the volcano; this is the whole terrestrial crust, the whole multitude which internal fire impels to rise and throw up either an Alpine chain or a better and freer society. And whatever heroism there may be in their madness, however great and contagious may be their thirst for martyrdom, murderers are never anything but murderers, whose deeds simply sow the seeds of horror. And if on the one hand Victor Mathis had avenged Salvat, he

had also slain him, so universal had been the cry of reprobation roused by the second crime, which was yet more monstrous and more useless than the first.

Guillaume, laughing in his turn, replied to Bertheroy in words which showed how completely he was cured: "You are right," he said, "all ends well since all contributes to truth and justice. Unfortunately, thousands of years are sometimes needed for any progress to be accomplished. . . . However, for my part, I am simply going to put my new explosive on the market, so that those who secure the necessary authorisation may manufacture it and grow rich. Henceforth it belongs to one and all. . . . And I've renounced all idea of revolutionising the world."

But Bertheroy protested. This great official scientist, this member of the Institute laden with offices and honours, pointed to the little motor, and replied with all the vigour of his seventy years: "But that is revolution, the true, the only revolution. It is with things like that and not with stupid bombs that one revolutionises the world! It is not by destroying, but by creating, that you have just done the work of a revolutionist. And how many times already have I not told you that science alone is the world's revolutionary force, the only force which, far above all paltry political incidents, the vain agitation of despots, priests, sectarians and ambitious people of all kinds, works for the benefit of those who will come after us, and prepares the triumph of truth, justice and peace. . . . Ah, my dear child, if you wish to overturn the world by striving to set a little more happiness in it, you have only to remain in your laboratory here, for

human happiness can spring only from the furnace of the scientist."

He spoke perhaps in a somewhat jesting way, but one could feel that he was convinced of it all, that he held everything excepting science in utter contempt. He had not even shown any surprise when Pierre had cast his cassock aside; and on finding him there with his wife and child he had not scrupled to show him as much affection as in the past.

Meantime, however, the motor was travelling hither and thither, making no more noise than a bluebottle buzzing in the sunshine. The whole happy family was gathered about it, still laughing with delight at such a victorious achievement. And all at once little Jean, Monsieur Jean, having finished sucking, turned round, displaying his milk-smeared lips, and perceived the machine, the pretty plaything which walked about by itself. At sight of it, his eyes sparkled, dimples appeared on his plump cheeks, and, stretching out his quivering chubby hands, he raised a cry of delight.

Marie, who was quietly fastening her dress, smiled at his glee and brought him nearer, in order that he might have a better view of the toy. "Ah! my darling, it's pretty, isn't it? It moves and it turns, and it's strong; it's quite alive, you see."

The others, standing around, were much amused by the amazed, enraptured expression of the child, who would have liked to touch the machine, perhaps in the hope of understanding it.

"Yes," resumed Bertheroy, "it's alive and it's powerful like the sun, like that great sun shining yonder over Paris, and ripening men and things. And Paris too is

a motor, a boiler in which the future is boiling, while we scientists keep the eternal flame burning underneath. Guillaume, my good fellow, you are one of the stokers, one of the artisans of the future, with that little marvel of yours, which will still further extend the influence of our great Paris over the whole world."

These words impressed Pierre, and he again thought of a gigantic vat stretching yonder from one horizon to the other, a vat in which the coming century would emerge from an extraordinary mixture of the excellent and the vile. But now, over and above all passions, ambitions, stains and waste, he was conscious of the colossal expenditure of labour which marked the life of Paris, of the heroic manual efforts in work-shops and factories, and the splendid striving of the young men of intellect whom he knew to be hard at work, studying in silence, relinquishing none of the conquests of their elders, but glowing with desire to enlarge their domain. And in all this Paris was exalted, together with the future that was being prepared within it, and which would wing its flight over the world bright like the dawn of day. If Rome, now so near its death, had ruled the ancient world, it was Paris that reigned with sovereign sway over the modern era, and had for the time become the great centre of the nations as they were carried on from civilisation to civilisation, in a sunward course from east to west. Paris was the world's brain. Its past so full of grandeur had prepared it for the part of initiator, civiliser and liberator. Only yesterday it had cast the cry of Liberty among the nations, and to-morrow it would bring them the religion of Science, the new faith

awaited by the democracies. And Paris was also gaiety, kindness and gentleness, passion for knowledge and generosity without limit. Among the workmen of its faubourgs and the peasants of its country-sides there were endless reserves of men on whom the future might freely draw. And the century ended with Paris, and the new century would begin and spread with it. All the clamour of its prodigious labour, all the light that came from it as from a beacon overlooking the earth, all the thunder and tempest and triumphant brightness that sprang from its entrails, were pregnant with that final splendour, of which human happiness would be compounded.

Marie raised a light cry of admiration as she pointed towards the city. "Look! just look!" she exclaimed; "Paris is all golden, covered with a harvest of gold!"

They all re-echoed her admiration, for the effect was really one of extraordinary magnificence. The declining sun was once more veiling the immensity of Paris with golden dust. But this was no longer the city of the sower, a chaos of roofs and edifices suggesting brown land turned up by some huge plough, whilst the sun-rays streamed over it like golden seed, falling upon every side. Nor was it the city whose divisions had one day seemed so plain to Pierre: eastward, the districts of toil, misty with the grey smoke of factories; southward, the districts of study, serene and quiet; westward, the districts of wealth, bright and open; and in the centre the districts of trade, with dark and busy streets. It now seemed as if one and the same crop had sprung up on every side, imparting harmony to everything, and making the entire expanse one sole,

boundless field, rich with the same fruitfulness. There was corn, corn everywhere, an infinity of corn, whose golden wave rolled from one end of the horizon to the other. Yes, the declining sun steeped all Paris in equal splendour, and it was truly the crop, the harvest, after the sowing!

“Look! just look,” repeated Marie, “there is not a nook without its sheaf; the humblest roofs are fruitful, and every blade is full-eared wherever one may look. It is as if there were now but one and the same soil, reconciled and fraternal. Ah! Jean, my little Jean, look! see how beautiful it is!”

Pierre, who was quivering, had drawn close beside her. And Mère-Grand and Bertheroy smiled upon that promise of a future which they would not see, whilst beside Guillaume, whom the sight filled with emotion, were his three big sons, the three young giants, looking quite grave, they who ever laboured and were ever hopeful. Then Marie, with a fine gesture of enthusiasm, stretched out her arms and raised her child aloft, as if offering it in gift to the huge city.

“See, Jean! see, little one,” she cried, “it’s you who’ll reap it all, who’ll store the whole crop in the barn!”

And Paris flared — Paris, which the divine sun had sown with light, and where in glory waved the great future harvest of Truth and of Justice.

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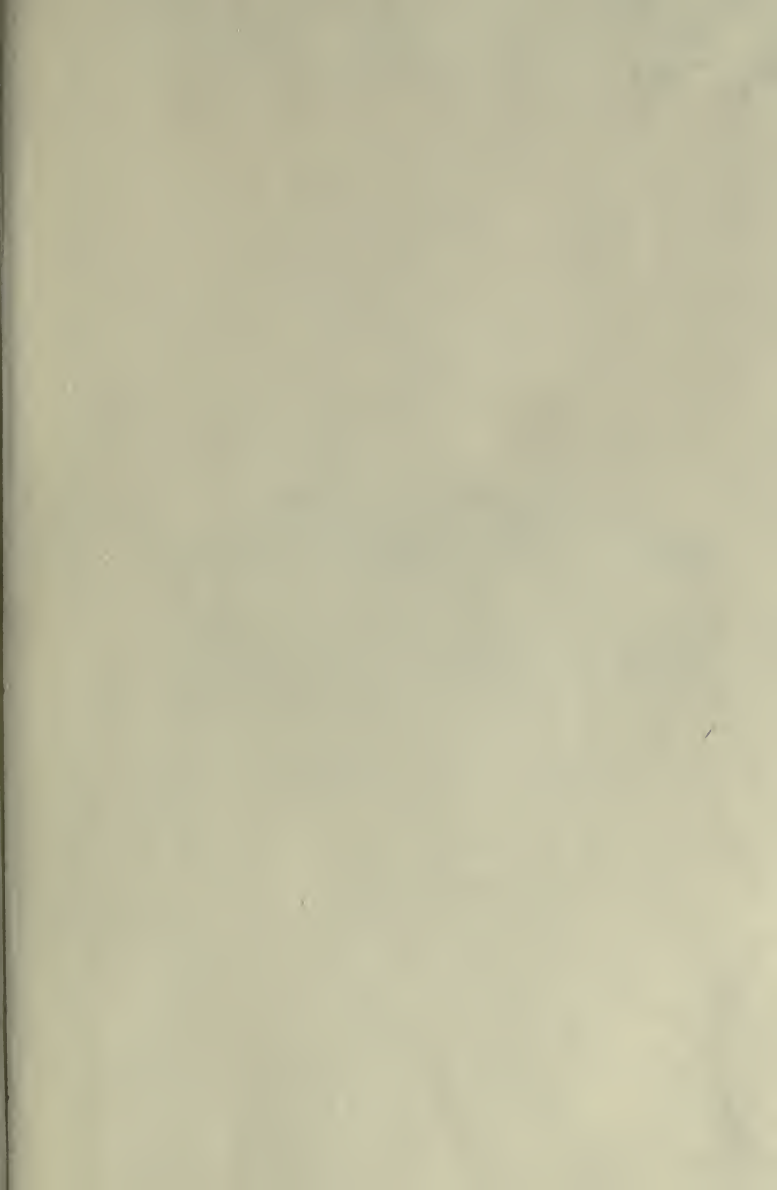
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